SELECTIONS FROM ENGLISH DRAMATISTS

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BY

GEOFFREY H. CRUMP

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this book is to show the evolution of the idea of drama in England from the earliest recorded performances until those of to-day. This is a large task to undertake in a small book, and the results are necessarily imperfect; my hope is that those who use the book will rectify omissions by making similar selections of their own. At the end of each chapter a list is given of plays from which such selections can profitably be made; but such lists cannot be exhaustive, and there are ample supplies to be tapped.

The scenes printed in this book are very considerably cut, as I thought it better and fairer to the authors to attempt to reproduce complete episodes rather than complete speeches. In a few instances a word or two has been altered or a line moved in order to adjust these 'cuts,' and stage-directions have been added in all chapters but the last when necessary; but as few liberties as possible have been taken with the texts, except in the extracts in Chapter I, where the plays have been rather more freely adapted, and at the end of the extract beginning on p. 165, where a few speeches from Act IV of *The Way of the World* have been added to Act II. In the extracts given in Chapters I to IV stage-directions that are those of the original text (other than formal directions such as "Exit") are printed between inverted commas.

In Chapters I to VI the dates assigned to the plays are those of composition, so far as these are known. In Chapters VII and VIII the dates given are those of

publication or production on the stage, whichever was the earlier.

I wish to express my gratitude to my friends Mr Graham Carter and Mr Alan Lubbock for their helpful criticisms and suggestions, and to Miss Barbara Nixon for her assistance with revision. I also feel especially indebted to the following books: *The Cambridge History of English Literature*; Mr Benjamin Brawley's *A Short History of the English Drama*; Mr Arnold Wynne's *The Growth of English Drama*; Professor Allardyce Nicoll's *A History of Restoration Drama, 1660–1700*, and *British Drama*; Mr Bonamy Dobrée's *Restoration Comedy, 1660–1720*; Mr T. H. Dickinson's *The Contemporary Drama of England*; and Miss M. Storm Jameson's *Modern Drama in Europe*.

Finally I have to thank the following authors and publishers for their kindness and courtesy in allowing me to make extracts from copyright material: Sir Arthur Pinero and Messrs William Heinemann, Ltd., for the use of *Sweet Lavender*; Captain Vivian Holland and Messrs Methuen and Co., Ltd., for the use of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*; Messrs John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., for the use of Stephen Phillips' *Paolo and Francesca*; Mr John Drinkwater and Messrs Sidgwick and Jackson, for the use of *Abraham Lincoln*; Mr John Galsworthy and Messrs Gerald Duckworth and Co., for the use of *Windows*; and Messrs George Allen and Unwin, for the use of Synge's *Riders to the Sea*. It should be remembered that the extracts published in this book carry with them no acting rights, and must not be performed in public without permission from the original publishers of the plays.

G. H. C.

STEEP

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SELECTIONS FROM ENGLISH DRAMATISTS

INTRODUCTION

THE ESSENTIAL QUALITIES OF DRAMA

IT is extremely difficult to specify exactly the qualities that constitute a good play: perhaps that it should be thoroughly interesting is as near as we can get. The term 'novel' nowadays seems to mean any interesting book about imaginary characters or incidents, or even about real characters or incidents treated with imagination, and includes books on every conceivable subject in every conceivable form. Similarly, William Archer defined a good play as "any representation of imaginary personages capable of interesting an average audience assembled in a theatre." Others have accepted this definition, and have proceeded to describe such plays as 'dramatic,' but that is another question altogether. A good play is an interesting play, but it is not necessarily dramatic: also it may be dramatic, and yet quite unsuited to the theatre. We commonly use the expression 'dramatic' of situations and incidents, both on the stage and in real life, so loosely and inaccurately that it is well, before beginning a study of the drama, to consider exactly what it means.

The dramatic quality has nothing necessarily to do with the stage, though we constantly use the word 'dramatic' when we mean 'theatric'—that is, peculiarly fitted for stage presentation. Many excellent plays (such as Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*, Congreve's *Way of the World*, and Shaw's

Getting Married) have little in them that is really dramatic, and many dramatic incidents, such as a shipwreck or a battle, or incidents too horrible and tragic to witness, are spoiled rather than improved by stage presentation. Melodrama is intensely dramatic, but more effective to read than to watch. The agony of King Lear or the Duchess of Malfi (pp. 128–136) is dreadful to watch, but supremely inspiring to imagine. Most great tragedy is now disappointing on the stage to anyone who has read and imagined the play for himself, because, as Charles Lamb pointed out, emphasis is wrongly thrown on action: we see Macbeth as a bloody-minded villain instead of feeling the torture in his soul.[1] Shakespeare's tragedies are among the most dramatic plays in the world, but to modern taste they are not all of them theatric. The reverse is true of comedy: the best comedy always gains by being acted, even if it is not dramatic. The comedy of manners of the Restoration playwrights had little dramatic quality, but was excellently suited to the stage by reason of its wit, literary beauty, and opportunities for finished and subtle acting.

What we mean by 'theatric' is clear—a play, or scene, is theatric if it is peculiarly suited in any way for stage presentation, whether spectacularly or because of its humour, wit, or excitement, or beauty of any kind. What do we mean by 'dramatic'? Some have argued that this quality is caused by the presence of contrast, surprise, or emotional excitement. But it is easy to see that, though all these are attributes of the dramatic quality, none is an exhaustive definition of it. There are many highly dramatic stories that contain no contrast, though it is a device frequently used in drama. Pure surprise is not even interesting: we

[1] This is largely because of modern theatre conditions and modern taste; it must be remembered that the Elizabethans read but little, and looked to the stage to provide much that we to-day prefer to seek in books.

are unmoved if two unknown men enter suddenly, and one kills the other. We want to know something about them. And lyrical poetry is emotionally exciting, but it is the antithesis of drama. The key to the problem is the word 'tension.' We call an incident dramatic when it arouses, completely occupies, and finally satisfies our intense interest. To do this it must move quickly, and it must move through all these three degrees. Complete surprise is not dramatic; it is best to guess what is going to happen, but to be unable to tell how it will happen. The inevitable outcome is made clear by degrees, and it is this complete process that we call a 'crisis,'[1] and that is the core of the dramatic idea. The dramatic quality might be defined as the rapid creation and satisfactory relaxation of the highest degree of tension, based on expectation rather than surprise.

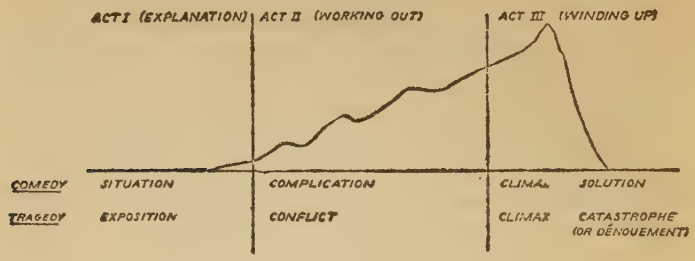
The dramatist, then, bases his play upon a crisis. He starts with a more or less normal state of affairs,[2] arouses our interest by complication which leads us to expect certain results, and finally unravels the complication in such a way as to satisfy our expectation and our sense of rightness, whether tragic or comic. Mr Galsworthy has said that a drama must have a "spire of meaning." The necessary element of tension is most easily secured if the complication is started early and the climax placed late, with the play ending rapidly after it. Normally, in a three-act play (which is much the same as a five-act play, with the three middle acts combined into one long second act), the "fuse is fired"[3] about the end of the first act, and the

[1] 'Crisis' is not the same as 'climax.' 'Crisis' means the entire progress from normality to climax, and back to normality again.

[2] In Greek drama the audience was introduced into the middle of the action of the play by means of an introductory recital of the events forming the earlier part of the crisis.

[3] That is, the story has reached the stage at which it cannot be

climax is reached early in the third act. A series of minor crises is generally introduced to sustain interest while the main plot works itself out. Thus a normal dramatic crisis is shaped somewhat as follows:



In some plays the climax is placed quite early; it is always interesting to notice the structure of the crisis on which a play is based, and to discover the means by which a dramatist creates the essential feeling of tension.

If a play is to be dramatic it must be based on a crisis of this kind; if it is to be theatric the crisis must be worked out in a way suited to the peculiarities and limitations of the theatre. A really good play possesses both qualities in the highest degree; that is what the word 'play' has now come to imply. There are many other qualities, such as wit, pathos, grandeur, romance, realism, moral purpose, literary beauty of phrase or rhythm, subtle characterization, and clever dialogue, but in a great play any or all of these are blended to make a dramatic whole, awaking intense emotional response, and achieving its greatest effect by theatric presentation to the audience for which it is intended. For it must be remembered that the moment an author decides to write for the theatre he confines himself to

unravelled until the whole play has worked itself out—in another metaphor, the toboggan has gathered such speed that it cannot be stopped, without a breakdown, until the run is completed.

expression within the limitations of the theatre, and in terms that will appeal to his public. Shakespeare wrote his tragedies for Elizabethans, not for us; the Restoration dramatists wrote for a small section of the community; and most dramatists writing to-day write with a special kind of audience in mind.

Just as the key to the dramatic quality is tension, so the key to the theatric quality is action. 'Drama' literally means 'doing.' A novelist describes his setting, characters, and incidents, but expresses himself entirely by words, and therefore relies chiefly upon the conversation of his characters. The dramatist is able to display his setting and incident and the persons of his characters, and, though he also makes great use of conversation, he expresses himself primarily by action. The purpose of drama is to reveal character by displaying the actions and utterances of human beings in situations of peculiar interest. Drama must always move quickly, and it is by the actions of his characters that a dramatist can most rapidly and surely arouse in his audience the thoughts and emotions that he wishes to arouse. We are more ready to judge people by what they do than by what they say. Drama was born of action, as we see from the earliest examples given in this book, particularly the Easter Play (see p. 30). And it will be found that the best stage-plays are those in which the characters reveal themselves by their actions; the other qualities mentioned above are all added qualities, which may or may not be present.

One of the dangers of studying the drama by means of extracts such as those given in this book is that the reader is apt to lose sight of the paramount importance of the merits of a play *as a whole*. It is a poor play indeed that has not a few good scenes or speeches, but the plays that satisfy this first of all artistic canons are rare. For this reason it is important that as many *whole* plays as possible

should be read (and occasionally acted) side by side with the scenes that are printed in this book; it is hoped that this introduction will be of assistance in pointing out the lines on which they can most profitably be considered and compared.

CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF ENGLISH DRAMA
(UP TO THE RENAISSANCE)

I. SECULAR INFLUENCES ON EARLY DRAMA. We cannot assume the existence of anything that may accurately be called drama or dramatic literature before the Norman Conquest. There were, however, certain forms of entertainment which exercised some influence on the drama as it took shape between 1066 and the middle of the sixteenth century.

(i) *Travelling entertainers and story-tellers* used to roam the country, and were sometimes permanently attached to the households of great men. But the entertainments of these minstrels consisted principally of ballads, recitations of epic poems, jests, practical jokes, horseplay, and anecdotes; even when it took the form of set duologue, it remained entirely undramatic. The most that they can be said to have done is to have kept alive the desire to be amused, and to have preserved the idea which lies at the root of all drama, that of pretending to be some one or something else.

(ii) More direct ancestors of the dramatic idea were the *seasonal festivals*, such as those at Twelfth Night, Shrove Tuesday, May-day, and harvest-time. These were entirely distinct from the festivals of the Church, and were a survival of the ancient pagan observances; it was out of such festivals that the Greek drama had grown. However, there is no direct road from village festival to drama in England as in Greece. English folk-songs never, like the

Greek, became the literary basis of later drama. But in some instances plays did grow out of traditional dances and games, as, for instance, at Coventry, where there was a 'Hock-Tuesday' play ('Hock-tide' was the Monday and Tuesday after the second Sunday after Easter) which originated from the custom of 'hocking,' a game in which the women 'hocked' the men (*i.e.*, caught them and bound them) in celebration of the anniversary of an English victory over the Danes in 1002. (An alternative explanation of the origin of 'hocking' is that it grew out of the immemorial pagan folk-custom of obtaining a sacrificial victim by force. 'Hockey,' as well as football and other games based on a contest for a ball, is said to have originated in struggles for the sacrificial victim's head.) The rimes for this play were probably worked up out of the folk-songs in traditional use for the Hock Festival.

Most dances were simply elementary efforts at dramatizing incidents in well-known stories, and often grew into more elaborate plays. The constant appearance of Maid Marian in the Morris dance at the May-game resulted in the introduction of Robin Hood and later of other characters as well. The St George plays, where one of the actors is attacked and killed with swords, developed out of the sword-dance, which, like 'hocking,' probably had its origin in sacrificial ritual. It is noticeable that the St George plays, like the mummers' plays which developed out of them, invariably introduced the incident of the death and restoration to life of one of the characters, probably because the dance from which they originated was connected with a pagan festival celebrating the death and resurrection of the year (a forerunner of our 'Christmas'). Such plays, the 'poor relations' of the miracle plays and interludes, were performed in village alehouses and baronial kitchens by 'mummers.' The term 'mummers' was originally applied to masked revellers, who appeared un-

expectedly and invited members of the company to dance. But later the name was used of regular performers. We have an excellent example of the mummers' play (burlesqued, indeed), in a rather later and more developed form, in the artisans' *Pyramus and Thisbe* in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. In the mummers' play the characters were introduced in a speech, then there was a dumb-show, sometimes accompanied and sometimes followed by speeches, and finally a kind of ballet, introducing a number of subsidiary characters. The plays, which were rude and unlettered performances, introduced (with bewildering catholicity) stock traditional figures such as the hero, the villain, the fool, the comic doctor, Beelzebub, Father Christmas, and the hobby-horse.

(iii) *Puppet-shows*, or 'motions' as they were called, were popular, particularly at fairs. They came from Italy, where they had been in existence for some time. Ostensibly they presented religious plays (Autolycus, in *The Winter's Tale*, mentions that he once "compassed a motion of the Prodigal Son"), but they probably allowed themselves considerable licence, and were regarded with disfavour by the authorities. The only puppet-play that has lasted until to-day is "Punch and Judy"—the "Pontius Pilate" and "Judas" of the miracle plays.

(iv) Alongside of these crude performances based on rough-and-tumble and dancing there grew up the practice of *pageants*, sometimes called 'ridings,' or 'disguisings.' These were processional shows, tableaux, without action or dialogue, on moving or movable stages. In Tudor times they were accompanied by dancing, but not, as yet, by dumb-show.

II. Early Religious Drama. Amusements of the kind described above developed into the mask, of which more will be said later. Though traces of these folk-plays are clearly discernible in the work of many of the Elizabethan dramatists

they have little to do with the development of the drama proper. This drama grew out of the Church services, to which it owes its structure, its main ideas, and its literary traditions. To the folk-plays it owes no more than a few stray ideas and the traditional figures mentioned above, which by the time of Shakespeare had become almost unrecognizable.

Religious plays had been in existence on the Continent for some time. They were of two kinds—'mystery plays,' based on the Bible narrative, and 'miracle plays,' based on legends about the Saints not actually related in the Bible. In England, however, the term 'mystery' was not used, and 'miracle plays' included all plays on religious subjects. Most of these were founded on the Bible narrative: for reasons to be shown later, the 'Saints' plays,' or miracle plays proper, were never very popular or very important in England. The term 'miracle plays' is used comprehensively in this book, and includes both 'mystery' and 'Saints'' plays.

The earliest example of the dramatizing of the liturgy is the Easter Play, dating from 967, which shows very well how such plays came into existence. It is evident from this that the idea of religious drama was in existence in England before the eleventh century, though no doubt the coming of the Normans, with more advanced ideas, accelerated its development. During the eleventh, twelfth, and most of the thirteenth centuries all drama was religious, and was written, supervised, and often acted by the clergy; it was performed either inside the churches, or on a scaffold erected just outside. We hear of attempts of secular companies to perform similar plays, but for a long time these were rigorously suppressed. Finally, however, by the beginning of the fifteenth century, acting had passed into the hands of the laity, and was no longer the monopoly of the clergy and their pupils. There were many reasons for this: the

principal one was that, though the plays were still religious in theme and purpose, they had developed in a way that made them less and less valuable to the ecclesiastical authorities, and were becoming too popular and too elaborate to be performed within the precincts of the churches.[1]

The municipal authorities, who made themselves responsible for the organization of dramatic performances when the great festivals of the Church came round, arranged the plays in 'cycles,' which covered the entire history of man and God's dealings with him, beginning with the Creation and ending with Doomsday. Four of these 'cycles' have been in part preserved—those of York, Wakefield (the Towneley[2] cycle), Coventry, and Chester. In 1415 the York cycle consisted of fifty-four pageants. In the middle of June, at the festival of Corpus Christi (instituted in 1264, and regarded in medieval times as the principal festival in the year), the whole cycle was played through in one day, beginning at dawn, and ending at dusk. It is important to think of these cycles as dramatic wholes, and not as collections of individual plays. They seem always to have been given in their entirety, on the same or on succeeding days, and it was out of the idea of tracing the

[1] It should be remembered that, though our drama owes its origin to the Church, the Church never did anything to help it when once it became secular. In the latter days of the Roman Empire the drama had become decadent and debased, and Christian Rome adopted an attitude of disapproval which became a tradition that has lasted throughout history until very recent times. Except in so far as drama served its own needs and was under its own control, religious authority, both before and after the Reformation, has always looked upon the drama as a dangerous and wicked pursuit, and actors first as rogues and vagabonds, and later, even when they were under the protection of the Court, as members of a scandalous and evil profession. Even Molière, for all his Court favour, was refused a Christian burial. Court favour, first extended by Queen Elizabeth, did much to raise the status of the player; but it is only in our own times that he has come to be looked upon with even qualified approval by the Churches.

[2] So called because the manuscript belonged to the library of Towneley Hall in Lancashire.

destiny of mankind from beginning to end that the ' morality plays ' evolved, and later the tragedy.

The chief delight of these plays to us now is their quaintness; the language and the ideas and the incidents are crude and charming, like the games of little children. Not the least delightful are the accounts kept by the acting companies, which record entries such as these:

Paid for the making of three worldes .	3*d.*
One pair of gloves for God . . .	2*d.*
Two and a half yards of buckram for the Holy Ghost's coat	2*s.* 1*d.*

But such ingenuousness was neither charming nor ridiculous to the medieval mind. If we are to realize how much English drama owes to these plays we must look, not for unconscious quaintness, but for conscious pathos and humour, and we shall not be disappointed. The subjects upon which the plays were based were both tragic and comic, and the writers often showed remarkable appreciation of the dramatic and poetic qualities of the story, and a surprising power of transmitting these qualities. Nor are the poetic beauties that are frequently to be found in these plays always dependent on the plot itself. For instance, in the *Secunda Pastorum* (*Second Shepherds' Play*) of the Towneley plays we get this wonderfully human and lovely greeting of the infant Christ by one of the shepherds:

> Hail, comely and clene; hail, yonge childe!
> Hail, maker, as I mean, of a maiden so milde! . . .
> Lo, he merries!
> Lo, he laughs! My sweeting,
> A welfare meeting,
> I have holden my hetyng.[1]
> Have a bob of cherries!

The comedy in these plays, like the pathos, is sometimes

[1] promise.

introduced and sometimes grows naturally out of the story. The Noah story is always treated as comic, as are certain incidents in which the Devil is introduced. But to accuse the writers of these plays of irreverence because they introduced comedy into sacred stories is to misunderstand the attitude of the fourteenth century to religion. Sentimentality was unknown to them: religion was a real and extremely important part of life, not a social duty for Sunday mornings. They were fully alive to the beauty of the Nativity, the noble pity of Abraham's resolve to sacrifice his son, and the tragedy and agony of Christ's betrayal and crucifixion—but they were just as fully alive to the humour of Noah's difficulties in getting his wife to go into the Ark. Their object was to make these stories live in the minds of their uneducated audiences. It is noticeable, too, that the dignity of the central figure is never impaired, even amid comic surroundings—such as the taunting of Christ on the Cross. And although such women as Noah's wife were traditionally comic characters the portrayal of the Virgin Mary and many other women gives a clear vision of the medieval ideal of womanhood—in some ways the noblest feature of the age of chivalry.

But in the hands of the gilds these plays were presented more and more to please, and not merely to edify; and this led to the introduction of episodes such as the sheep-stealing in the *Secunda Pastorum* (quoted in this chapter), which is pure comic relief, and has nothing whatever to do with the quite serious and very lovely Nativity play. This extract has been chosen because it is clearly from such independent comic scenes that the idea of the interlude sprang. Most of the plays belonging to any one cycle possess a similarity of style which shows them to be the work of one hand, though they were doubtless often worked out in collaboration. But it is remarkable that not one of the authors of the religious dramas of this period is known to us by name,

and not a single play appears to have been printed. All are written in metre, and in great variety of metrical form; as yet there was no traditional form for dramatic poetry, nor any idea of using prose. The gild plays were presented in the dialect of their particular district, whereas the earlier Church miracle plays were usually in Latin.

The acting of these plays was done by the trade gilds. Some time before a festival drew near the municipal authorities would allot one or more plays to each of the gilds, giving them as far as possible appropriate subjects; for instance, in the York cycle the building of the Ark was entrusted to the shipbuilders' gild. The allocation of the different scenes must not, however, always be interpreted in this way. The Chester authorities allotted the *Last Supper* to the Bakers, but it is to be supposed that such instances as *The Creation* by the Drapers, *The Temptation* by the Butchers, *The Descent into Hell* by the Cooks, *The Resurrection* by the Skinners, and *The Sending of the Holy Ghost* by the Fishmongers were no more than accidental.

Considerable trouble was taken over the performances; actors were carefully selected, and gilds were fined for inadequate productions, as were individual actors for not knowing their parts. Costumes were bought, borrowed, or bequeathed, and were very elaborate, being copied from stained-glass windows and illuminated manuscripts. The chief characters, such as the patriarchal God, the Devil in his hairskin suit, and St Peter with his gilt beard, soon became traditional, and were always presented in the same way. The staging seems to have been fairly ambitious: the accounts record payments for "a hook to hang Judas," "half a yard of Red Sea," and "starch to make a storm." There was plenty of music; payments were made for trumpets, drums, organs, and bagpipes. From these accounts, also, it appears that the actors were quite well

paid; 4*d.* was paid to a good cock-crower, and the part of God was worth 3*s.* 4*d.*—no mean fee in days when a fat goose cost only 3*d.* The plays were performed on scaffoldings, which were erected in the streets, or in inn-yards, or were sometimes built on wheels and moved about from place to place. The scaffoldings had three stories: at the top was a hollow roof, where angels lay in readiness to be let down on ropes; in the middle was the main stage; and below was the 'tiring-room,' which also served for Hell, whence the Devil could spring, and into which malefactors could descend. The plays sometimes overflowed into the street; messengers elbowed their way through the crowd, and the Devil made 'sallies' into the audience.

III. Morality Plays and Interludes. Whenever drama can truly be described as national—that is to say, when the theatre is not frequented only by a constant and specially educated audience, as it was in the latter part of the seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, and as it is to-day—it will be found that the plays are based on familiar and popular stories and incidents. This is exemplified in Greek drama, in the pantomime and popular drama of the nineteenth century, and to some degree in Elizabethan plays. It is therefore improbable that it was owing to familiarity of plot that the Bible plays passed out of use, but chiefly because their length and the undramatic qualities of much of the subject-matter made them unsuitable. The secret of their appeal lay in the fact that they dealt with a problem which has been of pressing interest in all ages—the eternal struggle between good and evil. As on the Continent, an attempt was made to provide variety by writing plays round legends of the Saints—but these plays did not as a rule illustrate the problem of human destiny, with which, owing to the custom of performing the religious plays in cycles, it had become natural to associate the idea of drama. The Saints' plays, therefore, never had any

considerable vogue in England. Efforts were made, however, to preserve the central idea of the miracle plays, yet to give it a new setting, and these attempts led to the 'morality'—a play in which the story of the fall and redemption of man, narrated at full length and in familiar terms in the Bible narrative, is worked out in new persons and new situations and incidents. At first the characters were merely personified abstractions, such as Ignorance, Perseverance, and Avarice; but in the later moralities they are more definitely individualized in such persons as Hick Scorner and Cuthbert Cutpurse. The ethical element was still preserved, though it had become moral rather than religious. The later moralities no longer aimed at teaching, and took up the discussion of intellectual, philosophical, and even political questions. But they were all frankly allegorical. The medieval age loved allegory, as may be seen from its folklore, and from what little literature it produced (e.g., *Piers Plowman* in English and *Le Roman de la Rose* in French). In these moralities we find beauty of thought and language, compact arrangement, and real conversation such as exist in none of the miracle plays. The plots are better, too, though in the later plays, such as *Hick Scorner*, where characterization is more ambitious, the plot suffers somewhat. The characterization is far more careful and complete. Yet, though the moralities are on the whole more effective than the miracle plays, they contain nothing to equal the few noble characters and rare fine scenes in the earlier plays.

The Devil of the miracle plays gradually gave way to a new figure called the Vice, though in some of the earlier moralities they appear together, and many are without either Devil or Vice. The Vice is of obscure origin, but he rapidly became a traditional figure. He appears under different names (such as Iniquity, Inclination, Tediousness, Wrong Report) and in different costumes, but he had certain

traditional properties, such as a dagger of lath (see Feste's song in *Twelfth Night*). He was always a merry fellow, and was responsible for a good deal of horseplay.

The interlude first made its appearance at the beginning of the sixteenth century. It was originally an amusing episode introduced between the scenes of a serious play or at the intervals in a banquet; but the name was adopted by many writers of moralities, and soon came to be used indiscriminately for any short dramatic performance. The interlude proper differed from the morality in that it aimed at still more realistic characterization, and was more definitely intended to amuse rather than to edify—though usually even the most farcical interludes led firmly to the conclusion that virtue was preferable to vice. In most of these plays there was a considerable amount of buffoonery and horseplay. Here, and in some of the traditional figures, we see the influence of the folk-plays mentioned above. Ulpian Fulwell's interlude, *Like Will to Like*, an extract from which is given on pp. 48–55, introduces both Devil and Vice, and leads up, through the broadest comedy, to an extremely moral conclusion. The later interludes of John Heywood, who wrote in the reign of Henry VIII, though not very readable or actable, are interesting in showing the transition of the drama from religion to pure comedy. Most of them contain no Devil or Vice, and often introduce only two or three characters; they have no moral purpose, and allegory too is dispensed with, the object being to amuse by comic dialogue and the portrayal of contemporary citizen types.

The moralities and interludes were performed chiefly by professional actors, usually under the patronage of noblemen, or by boys of the various choir-schools. At the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign eight "players of Interludes" were permanently attached to the Court. The method of production was similar to that of the miracle

plays, only more elaborate. Henry VIII restricted their activities in some degree, and Queen Elizabeth on coming to the throne prohibited all dramatic performances dealing with religion or politics. However, though this probably had considerable effect in narrowing the range of dramatic entertainments, particularly at Court and in London, interludes, moralities, and even miracle plays continued to be performed right on into the seventeenth century.

AN EASTER PLAY

(*About* 967)

This play was intended to be introduced into the Church service, and cannot be effectively performed on a stage. It is given here as an example of the very early idea of drama as a means of religious instruction.

"*While the third lesson is being chanted, let four brothers vest themselves, one of whom, vested in an alb, enters as if to do something, and, in an inconspicuous way, approaches the place where the sepulchre is, and, holding a palm in his hand, sits quiet. While the third respond is chanted, let the three others approach, all alike vested in copes, bearing thuribles*[1] *with incense in their hands, and, with hesitating steps, in the semblance of persons seeking something, let them come before the place of the sepulchre. These things are done, indeed, in representation of the angel sitting within the tomb and of the women who came with spices to anoint the body of Jesus. When, therefore, he who is seated sees the three approaching as if wandering about and seeking something, let him begin to sing melodiously and in a voice moderately loud,*"

Whom seek you at the Sepulchre, O Christians?

"*When this has been sung to the end, let the three respond in unison,*"

Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified, O heavenly one.

"*Then he,*"

He is not here; he is risen, as was foretold.
Go ye, announcing that he has risen from the dead.

[1] censers.

"*Upon the utterance of this command, let the three turn to the choir and say,*"

Alleluia! The Lord is risen.

"*This said, let him, still remaining seated, say, as if calling them back, the antiphon,*"

Come, and see the place where the Lord lay.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

"*Having said this, however, let him rise and lift the veil, and show them the place empty of the Cross, but the clothes only laid there. When they see this, let them set down the thuribles that they have carried within that same sepulchre, and take up the cloth and hold it before the clergy, and, as if in testimony that the Lord has risen and is not now wrapped therein, let them sing this antiphon:*"

The Lord has risen from the tomb,
Who for us was crucified,

"*and let them lay the cloth upon the altar. The antiphon finished, let the Prior, rejoicing with them in the triumph of our King, in that, death vanquished, He has risen, begin the hymn,*"

We praise thee, O Lord.

"*This begun, all the bells are rung together, at the end of which let the priest say the verse,*"

In thy resurrection, O Christ,

"*as far as this word, and let him begin Matins, saying,*"

O Lord, make haste to help us.

THE CHESTER PAGEANT OF "ABRAHAM AND ISAAC"

(*Acted by the Barbers and Wax-chandlers. Fifteenth century*)

No scenery is required. The dresses and properties should be done according to the information given above. There should be very little movement, and the gestures and speech should be stilted and elaborate. Every effort should be made to capture the fifteenth-century atmosphere in presentation.

Enter on one side ABRAHAM, *and on the other* GOD

GOD. Abraham, my servant, Abraham.

ABRAHAM [*kneeling*]. Lo, Lord, already here I am.

GOD. Take Isaac, thy son by name
That thou lovest best of all,
And in sacrifice offer him to me
Upon that hill, beside thee.
Abraham, I will that it so be,
For aught that may befall.
ABRAHAM. My Lord, to thee is my intent
Ever to be obedient,
That son that thou to me hast sent,
Offer I will to thee.
And fulfil thy commandment
With hearty will, as I am kent
High God, Lord Omnipotent,
Thy bidding done shall be.
[*Exit* GOD. ABRAHAM *rises.* *Enter* ISAAC.
ABRAHAM. Make thee ready, my darling,
For we must do a little thing.
This wood upon thy back thou bring,
We must not long abide.
A sword and fire I will take,
For sacrifice I must make;
God's bidding will I not forsake,
But aye obedient be.
ISAAC. Father, I am all ready
To do your bidding meekly,
To bear this wood full bound am I,
As you command me.
ABRAHAM. O Isaac, Isaac, my darling dear,
My blessing now I give thee here.
[ISAAC *kneels down.* ABRAHAM *blesses him, and then puts the bundle of faggots on his back before he has time to get up.*
Take up this faggot with good cheer,
And on thy back it bring,
And fire with me I will take.
ISAAC. Your bidding I will not forsake,
Father, I will never slake
To fulfil your bidding. [*They set out for the hill.*
ABRAHAM [*on their way out*]. Now, Isaac, son, go we our way
To yonder mountain, if that we may.

ISAAC. My dear Father, I will assay
To follow you full fain.
[*Exeunt, and re-enter immediately the other side*
ABRAHAM. Oh! my heart will break in three,
To hear thy words I have pity. [*He bows, and lifts up his hands.*
As thou wilt, Lord, so must it be;
To thee I will be bane.[1]
Lay down thy faggot, my own son dear!
ISAAC. All ready, Father, lo, it is here.
But why make you so heavy cheer?
Are you anything adread? [ABRAHAM *draws his sword.*
Father, if it be your will,
Where is the beast that we shall kill?
ABRAHAM. There is none, son, upon this hill
That I see here in this stead.
ISAAC. Is it God's will I should be slain?
ABRAHAM. Yea, son, it is not for thee to layne;[2]
To His bidding I will be bane,
Ever to His pleasing.
ISAAC. Marry, Father, God forbid
But you do your off'ring.
Father, at home your sons you shall find
That you must love by course of kind.
Be I once out of your mind,
Your sorrow may soon cease.
But you must do God's bidding. [*Pausing a moment.*
Father, tell my mother of nothing.
ABRAHAM. For sorrow I may my hands wring,
Thy mother I cannot please.
O Isaac, blessed mayst thou be!
Almost my wit I lose for thee,
The blood of thy body so free
I feel full loth to shed.
ISAAC. Father, one thing I would you pray:
Since I must die the death this day,
As few strokes as you may
When you smite off my head.
ABRAHAM. Thy meekness, child, makes me afray:
My song may be "Welaway"!

[1] obedient. [2] hesitate.

ISAAC [*impatiently*]. Oh, dear Father, do away
Your making so mickle moan!
Now truly, Father, this talking
Doth but make long tarrying.
I pray you come, and make ending,
And let me hence gone.
ABRAHAM. Come hither, my child, that art so sweet:
Thou must be bound now, hand and feet. [*He binds* ISAAC.
ISAAC. Ah, Father! We must no more meet,
By aught that I can see.
Father, greet well my brethren young,
And pray my mother for her blessing,
I come no more under her wing:
Farewell for ever and aye!
But, Father, I cry you mercy
Of that I have trespassed to thee,
Forgiven, Father, that it may be
Until doom's day.
ABRAHAM. Heart! if thou wouldst break in three,
Thou shalt never master me,
I will no longer wait for thee,
My God I may not grieve.
ISAAC. Ah, mercy, Father! why tarry you so?
Smite off my head, and let me go!
I pray you, rid me of my woe,
For now I take my leave.
[ABRAHAM *is about to kill his son, when two angels appear. One of them seizes the point of the sword.*
FIRST ANGEL. Abraham, my servant dear!
ABRAHAM. Lo, Lord! I am already here.
FIRST ANGEL. Lay not thy sword in any manner
On Isaac, thy dear darling!
Nay, do thou him no annoy!
For thou dreadest God; well see I
That of thy son hast no mercy
To fulfil His bidding.
SECOND ANGEL. And for His bidding thou dost aye,
And sparest neither, for fear nor fray,
To do thy son to death to-day,
Isaac to thee full dear.

Therefore God has sent by me in fay,
A lamb that is both good and gay
Into this place as thou see may,
Lo! it is right here. [*Exeunt* ANGELS.

ABRAHAM. Ah, Lord of heaven and king of bliss!
Thy bidding I shall do, I wis.
Sacrifice here to me sent is,
And all, Lord, through Thy grace.
A hornèd wether here I see,
Among the briars tied is he,
To Thee offered it shall be
Anon, right in this place.

[" *Let* ABRAHAM *sacrifice the ram.*" *Presumably he would first release* ISAAC. *After the sacrifice* GOD *appears.* ABRAHAM *and* ISAAC *kneel.*

GOD. Abraham, by Myself I swear,
For thou hast been obedient ever,
And sparèd not thy son so dear,
To do as I thee bade,
Therefore all nations, 'lieve thou Me,
Blessèd evermore shall be
Through fruit that shall come of thee
And savèd through thy seed.
[*Exit* GOD, *followed by* ABRAHAM *and* ISAAC.

THE EPILOGUE

EXPOSITOR. Lordings, the signification
Of this deed of devotion,
An you will, it is shown,
May turn you to much good.
The deed you see done in this place,
In example of Jesus done it was,
That for to win mankind grace
Was sacrificed on the Rood.
By Abraham you may understand
The father of heaven that can fand[1]
With His son's blood to break that band
The Devil had brought us to.

[1] find means.

By Isaac understand I may
Jesus who was obedient aye,
His father's will to work alway,
His death to undergo.

THE WAKEFIELD SECOND NATIVITY PLAY "SECUNDA PASTORUM"

(Fifteenth century)

There are two scenes in the part of this play that is given here, and the easiest way to present it is to divide the stage into two parts up and down the centre. The division should be so placed that it is not exactly at right angles to the vision of the audience. Both scenes will thus be visible the whole time, and stage directions are given for this arrangement. One of these scenes represents the open moor, and no scenery or properties are necessary. The other represents Mac's cottage, and must contain a rough chair, a table, a bed in which Gill, Mac's wife, is pretending to be ill, and a baby's cot.

Mac has stolen a sheep, and has brought it home to his wife to conceal: meanwhile he has been out to see if the other shepherds have missed it. He comes back with the news that they are just going to count their sheep, and he knows that when they miss it they will suspect him, and come after him. Gill shows Mac what she has done—she has wrapped the sheep up and put it in the cradle: she now proposes to get into bed and pretend to be ill, so that when they come and search she can get rid of them the quicker. Mac is to warn her of their coming by singing. The language is rather difficult, and care must be taken to interpret the meaning by using expressive intonation and plenty of gesture and 'business.' Costume—medieval rustic clothes.

GILL *is just tucking the sheep up in the cradle. Enter* MAC, *outside. He goes to the door and knocks impatiently.*

MAC. Undo this door! Who is here? How long shall I stand?

GILL. Who makes such a stir? Now walk in the wenyand.[1]

MAC. Ah, Gill, what cheer? It is I, Mac, your husband.

[*She lets him in, crossly.*

[*Half to himself*] Will ye hear what fare[2] she makes—to get her a glose,[3]
And do naught but lakes[4]—and close her toes.

[1] waning moon. [2] fuss. [3] excuse. [4] amusements.

GILL [*rounding on* MAC, *justly furious at a charge of idleness*]. Why, who wanders? Who wakes? Who comes? Who goes? Who brews? Who bakes? Who makes for me this hose [*showing him his stockings, which she is making*]?
And then
It is ruth to behold,
Now in hot, now in cold,
Full woeful is the household
That wants a woman.
But what end hast thou made with the herds, Mac?

MAC. The last word that they said, when I turned my back,
They would look that they had their sheep, all the pack.
But howso the game goes,
To me they will suppose,[1]
And make a foul noise,
And cry out upon me.

GILL [*taking him to the cradle and showing him the sheep*]. I have swaddled him right in my cradle.
[*Proudly*] If it were a greater slight[2] yet, I could help still.
I will lie down straight. Come, hap me. [*She gets into bed.*
Harken aye when they call; they will come anon.
[MAC *goes to the door and listens apprehensively.*
Come and make ready all, and sing by thine own;[3]
Sing lullay thou shall, for I must groan,
And cry out by the wall on Mary and John
Full sore.
Sing lullay full fast
When thou hearest at last;
And but I play a false cast,[2]
Trust me no more.

[*She lies down.* MAC *sits by the cot, and begins to croon softly to the sheep. Enter the three* SHEPHERDS *outside: directly their voices are heard* MAC *begins to sing Lullay loudly, and his wife to groan. This is of course in case the sheep should bleat.*

THIRD SHEPHERD. Ah, Coll, good morn. Why sleepest thou not?

FIRST SHEPHERD. Alas that ever I was born! We have a foul blot.
A fat wether we have lorne.

[1] suspect. [2] trick. [3] to yourself.

THIRD SHEPHERD. Marry, God forbot.
SECOND SHEPHERD. Who should do us that scorn? That were a foul spot.
FIRST SHEPHERD. Some shrew.
I have sought with my dogs,
All Horbery Shroggs,
And of fifteen hogs[1]
Found I but one ewe.
THIRD SHEPHERD [*emphatically*]. Now trust me if ye will. By Saint Thomas of Kent
Either Mac or Gill was at that assent.[2]
SECOND SHEPHERD. Now as ever might I thee,[3]
If I should even here die,
I would say it were he
That did that same deed.
[*The singing and groaning inside grows very loud.*
THIRD SHEPHERD. Will ye hear how they hack![4] Our Sire! List, how they croon!
FIRST SHEPHERD. Heard I never none crack—so clear out of tune!
Call on him.
SECOND SHEPHERD. Mac! Undo your door soon!
MAC [*getting up*]. Who is that, I say? [*He comes out to them.*
As far as ye may,
Good, speak ye soft!
Over a sick woman's head that is at mal-ease;
I had liefer be dead or she had any disease.
GILL. Go to another stead; I may not well queeze:[5]
Each foot that ye tread goes near make me sneeze. [*Sneezes.*
MAC [*politely*]. I would ye dined ere ye yode:[6] methinks that ye sweat.
SECOND SHEPHERD. Nay, neither mends our mode, drink nor meat.
MAC. Why, sir, what ails you—aught but good?
THIRD SHEPHERD. Yes, our sheep that we gat
Are stolen as they yode.[6] Our loss is great.
MAC [*hoping to pass off the subject by reference to drinks*]. Sirs, drinkys! [*They make no reply, but watch him steadily.*
[*Airily*] Had I been there,
Some should have bought it full dear.

[1] young sheep. [2] had a hand in this. [3] thrive.
[4] make game. [5] breathe. [6] went.

FIRST SHEPHERD. Marry, some men trow that ye were,
And that us forthinkys.
SECOND SHEPHERD. Mac, some men trow that it should be ye.
THIRD SHEPHERD. Either ye or your spouse, so say we.
MAC. Now if ye have suspouse[1] to Gill or to me,
Come and search our house, and then may ye see
Who had her. [*The shepherds go into the house, and search.*
If I any sheep got,
Either cow or stot,
And Gill, my wife, rose not
Here since she laid her,
As I am both true and leal, to God here I pray,
That this be the first meal I shall eat this day.
[GILL *groans loudly while they seek. When they have finished searching the shepherds meet and discuss the situation.*
SECOND SHEPHERD. I know our sheep be slain, what find ye too?
THIRD SHEPHERD. All work we in vain: as well may we go.
SECOND SHEPHERD [*to* MAC]. Sir, done!
[*As he takes his leave he nods toward the cradle.*
Sir, Our Lady him save,
Is your child a knave?[2]
MAC. Any lord might him have
This child to his son.
When he wakens he skips, that joy is to see.
THIRD SHEPHERD. In good time be his steps, and happy they be!
[*He shakes hands and goes out with the first shepherd.*
SECOND SHEPHERD. Mac, friends will we be, for we are all one.
[*He shakes hands and goes out.*
MAC. Farewell all three. All glad are ye gone.
[*He sits down with a sigh of relief.*
THIRD SHEPHERD. Fair words may there be, but love there is none.
FIRST SHEPHERD. Gave ye the child anything?
SECOND SHEPHERD. I trust not one farthing.
THIRD SHEPHERD. Fast again will I fling,
Abide ye me there.
[*He goes back into the cottage: the others wait outside.*

[1] suspicion. [2] boy.

THIRD SHEPHERD. Mac, with your leave, let me give your barn
But sixpence.
MAC [*jumping up*]. Nay, go away: he sleeps.
THIRD SHEPHERD [*peering into the cradle*]. Methinks he peeps.
MAC [*trying to keep him away*]. When he wakens he weeps,
I pray you go hence. [*The other shepherds come in.*
THIRD SHEPHERD. Give me leave him to kiss, and lift up the clout. [*He lifts up the bedclothes.*
What a Devil is this? He hath a long snout!
[*The others go to the cot.*
SECOND SHEPHERD. He is like to our sheep.
FIRST SHEPHERD. How, Gib, may I peep?
THIRD SHEPHERD. I trow, kind will creep,
Where it may not go.
[*All this time* MAC *whispers anxiously to* GILL, *who has got out of bed.*
THIRD SHEPHERD. Will ye see how they swaddle
His four feet in the middle? [*They laugh.*
Saw I never in a cradle
A horned lad ere now.
GILL [*who is an optimist*]. A pretty child is he
As sits upon a woman's knee;
A dilly-downe, perdie!
To make a man laugh.
THIRD SHEPHERD. I know him by the ear-mark: that is a good token.
MAC. I tell you, sirs, hark, his nose was broken.
Since then, told me a clerk, that he was forespoken.[1]
FIRST SHEPHERD. This is false work: I would fain be wroken:[2]
Get a weapon!
GILL. He was taken by an elf;
I saw it myself.
When the clock struck twelve
Was he misshapen.
THIRD SHEPHERD. Sirs, do my reed;[3]
For this trespass,
We will neither ban,[4] nor flyte,[5]
Fight, nor chyte,[6]

[1] bewitched. [2] revenged. [3] advice.
[4] curse. [5] flout. [6] chide.

But seize him tyte[1]
And cast him in canvas.

[*They take a blanket from the bed and toss* MAC *in it, and then go out to the moor again. The play proceeds with the annunciation to them by the angels of the birth of Christ, and their visit to Bethlehem.*

EVERYMAN

(*Fifteenth century*)

This morality is believed to have originated in Holland, at the end of the fifteenth century. It deals entirely with the subject of death, and is remarkable as being wholly serious; there is no comic relief, and it reaches and remains at a high level of both thought and expression.

[At the beginning of the play the voice of God is heard proclaiming that, as man is so drowned in sin, He has decided to have a "reckoning of every man's personel."] [2] At the bidding of God, Death, His "mighty messenger," summons Everyman to prepare for his last pilgrimage. Everyman is entirely unprepared; his pleadings for respite are of no avail, but he obtains permission to take companions, if he can persuade any to go with him. Fellowship enters, and, noticing Everyman's distress, asks its cause and professes his readiness to die for him; but when he learns Everyman's request he refuses to go a step with him. [Everyman then appeals to Kindred, and Cousin, and Goods (Property), and finally to his Good-deeds, whom he finds so bound down by his sins that she cannot move. She introduces to him, however, her sister Knowledge, with whose help he learns to repent, receives pardon for his sins, and frees Good-deeds to come with him.] He then sets out on his pilgrimage accompanied by Knowledge, Good-deeds, Beauty, Strength, Discretion, and Fivewits, but all these, with the exception of Good-deeds, forsake him when he comes to the grave.

No scenery is required, but there should be a raised platform at the back of the stage, upon which Death stands, and behind which Everyman descends into his tomb. Everyman and Fellowship should be gaily dressed in medieval style; the other characters should be as symbolic as possible, but it is important to obtain a homogeneous and picturesque effect. The acting should be dignified, and much care should be taken about grouping, gesture, and movement, which should be stately and symbolic.

When the curtain rises DEATH *stands motionless at the back of the stage. He is visible to the audience, but to* EVERYMAN, *who*

[1] at once.

[2] The sentences in brackets summarize passages of the actual play which are omitted in the extract printed below.

should not look at him, he is only a voice. EVERYMAN *enters cheerfully, laughing and waving to his friends whom he has just left, and who can be heard singing and laughing in the distance. He stops suddenly and listens.*

DEATH. Everyman, stand still: whither art thou going
Thus gaily? Hast thou thy Maker forgot?
In great haste I am sent to thee
From God out of His majesty.

EVERYMAN [*in a surprised and amused manner*]. What desireth God of me?

DEATH. That shall I show thee.
On thee thou must take a long journey:
Therefore thy book of count with thee thou bring:
For turn again thou can not by no way,
And look thou be sure of thy reckoning.

EVERYMAN [*apprehensively*]. I know thee not: what messenger art thou?

DEATH. I am Death, that no man dreadeth.[1]
For every man I rest,[2] and no man spareth.

EVERYMAN [*in terror*]. O Death, thou cometh when I had thee least in mind;
Yet of my good will I give thee, if ye will be kind,
And defer this matter till another day.

DEATH. Everyman, it may not be by no way.
I give thee no respite; come hence, and not tarry.

EVERYMAN. Death, if I should this pilgrimage take,
And my reckoning surely make,
Show me, for Saint Charity,
Shall I not come again shortly?

DEATH. No, Everyman; and thou be once there
Thou mayst never more come here.

EVERYMAN [*kneeling in prayer*]. O gracious God, in the high seat celestial,
Have mercy on me in this most need.

[*After a short pause he rises, and speaks to the voice of* DEATH *again.*

Shall I have no company from this vale terrestrial
Of mine acquaintance that way me to lead?

DEATH. Yea, if any be so hardy,

[1] *I.e.*, that dreadeth no man. [2] wait

That would go with thee and bare thee company.
What, weenest thou thy life is given thee,
And thy worldly goods also?
EVERYMAN. I had weened so, verily.
DEATH. Nay, nay; it was but lent thee;
For, as soon as thou art go,
Another awhile shall have it, and then go therefro,
Even as thou hast done.
And now out of thy sight I will me hie;
See thou make thee ready shortly,
For thou mayst say this is the day
That no man living may scape away. [*Exit* DEATH.
EVERYMAN. Alas, I may well weep with sighs deep;
Now have I no manner of company
To help me in my journey, and me to keep;
And also my writing is full unready.
How shall I do now for to excuse me?
I would to God I had never been got!
To my soul a full great profit it had be;
For now I fear pains huge and great. [*Clock-bell strikes.*
The time passeth, and is almost ago;
I wot not well what for to do. [*He sits down and ponders.*
To whom were I best my complaint to make?
What and I to Fellowship thereof spake,
And showed him of this sudden chance?
For in him is all mine affiance;
We have in the world so many a day
Be on good friends in sport and play. [*Looking into the wings.*
I see him yonder, certainly;
I trust that he will bear me company.
Therefore to him will I speak to ease my sorrow.

Enter FELLOWSHIP

Well met, good Fellowship, and good morrow!
FELLOWSHIP. Everyman, good morrow, by this day.
Sir, why lookest thou so piteously?
If anything be amiss, I pray thee, me say,
That I may help to remedy.
EVERYMAN. Yea, good Fellowship, yea,
I am in great jeopardy.

FELLOWSHIP. My true friend, show to me your mind;
I will not forsake thee, unto my life's end,
In the way of good company.
EVERYMAN. That was well spoken, and lovingly;
I shall deserve it, and I may.
FELLOWSHIP. I speak of no deserving, by this day.
For he that will say and nothing do
Is not worthy with good company to go;
Therefore show me the grief of your mind,
As to your friend, most loving and kind.
EVERYMAN. I shall show you how it is;
Commanded I am to go a journey,
A long way, hard and dangerous,
And give a strait count without delay,
Before the high judge, Adonai.
Wherefore I pray you, bear me company,
As ye have promised, in this journey.
FELLOWSHIP [*whose expression has grown more and more dismayed*].
That is matter indeed! Promise is duty,
But, and I should take such a voyage on me,
I know it well, it should be to my pain:
Also it make me afeard, certain.
EVERYMAN. Why, ye said, if I had need,
Ye would never me forsake, quick nor dead,
Though it were to hell truly.
FELLOWSHIP. So I said, certainly.
But, if we took such a journey,
When should we come again?
EVERYMAN. Nay, never again, till the day of doom.
FELLOWSHIP. In faith, then, will not I come there!
Who hath you these tidings brought?
EVERYMAN. Indeed, Death was with me here.
FELLOWSHIP. Now, by God that all hath bought,
If Death were the messenger,
For no man that is living to-day
I will not go that loath journey!
EVERYMAN. Gentle fellow, help me in my necessity;
We have loved long, and now I need,
And now, gentle Fellowship, remember me.
FELLOWSHIP. Whether ye have loved me or no,

By Saint John I will not with thee go. [*Going.*
And as now, God speed thee in thy journey,
For from thee I will depart as fast as I may.
EVERYMAN. Whither away, Fellowship, will you forsake me?
FELLOWSHIP. Yea, by my fay, to God I betake thee.
EVERYMAN. Farewell, good Fellowship; for this my heart is sore;
Adieu for ever; I shall see thee no more.
FELLOWSHIP. In faith, Everyman, farewell now at the end;
For you I will remember that parting is mourning. [*Exit.*
EVERYMAN. Alack, shall we thus depart indeed?
Lo, Fellowship forsaketh me in my most need:
For help in this world whither shall I resort?

[*Enter* KNOWLEDGE *and* GOOD-DEEDS, *and stand one on his right hand and one at his left.* GOOD-DEEDS *carries a cross.*

KNOWLEDGE. Everyman, I will go with thee, and be thy guide,
In thy most need to go by thy side.
God see-eth thy living in His throne above;
[*Holding out a threadbare cloak to him*] Put on this garment to thy behove.[1]
EVERYMAN. Gentle Knowledge, what do you it call?
KNOWLEDGE. It is a garment of sorrow:
From pain it will you borrow:
It pleaseth God passing well. [EVERYMAN *takes it.*
GOOD-DEEDS. Everyman, will you wear it for your heal?
[EVERYMAN *puts it on.*
EVERYMAN. Now blessed be Jesu, Mary's son,
For now have I on true contrition.
And let us go now, without tarrying;
Good-deeds, have we clear our reckoning?
GOOD-DEEDS [*showing a book*]. Yea, indeed, I have it here.
EVERYMAN. Then I trust we need not fear;
Now, friends, let us not part in twain.
KNOWLEDGE. Nay, Everyman, that will we not, certain.
GOOD-DEEDS. Yet must thou lead with thee
Three persons of great might.
EVERYMAN. Who should they be?
GOOD-DEEDS. Discretion and Strength they hight,
And thy Beauty may not abide behind.

[1] advantage.

KNOWLEDGE. Also ye must call to mind
Your Fivewits as for your counsellors.
GOOD-DEEDS. You must have them ready at all hours.
EVERYMAN. How shall I get them hither?
KNOWLEDGE. You must call them all together,
And they will hear you incontinent.
EVERYMAN [*calling*]. My friends, come hither and be present,
Discretion, Strength, my Fivewits, and Beauty.
[*They enter, and stand grouped behind* EVERYMAN.
BEAUTY. Here at your will we be all ready.
What will ye that we should do?
GOOD-DEEDS. That ye would with Everyman go,
And help him in his pilgrimage.
STRENGTH. We will bring him all thither,
To his help and comfort, ye may believe me.
DISCRETION. So will we go with him all together.
EVERYMAN [*kneeling*]. Almighty God, loved thou be;
All be in my company at my will here,
I desire no more to my business.
STRENGTH. And I, Strength, will by you stand in distress,
Though thou would in battle fight on the ground.
FIVEWITS. And though it were through the world round
We will not depart for sweet nor sour.
BEAUTY. No more will I until death's hour,
Whatsoever thereof befall.

[GOOD-DEEDS *gives the cross to* EVERYMAN, *and they form a procession and pass off the stage. A hymn or psalm, such as the "Veni Creator" or the "Nunc Dimittis," may be sung if desired. They re-enter the stage, and* EVERYMAN, KNOWLEDGE, *and* GOOD-DEEDS *go up to the platform at the back: the others stand grouped about the stage. All look toward* EVERYMAN.

EVERYMAN. Alas, I am so faint I may not stand,
My limbs under me do fold.
Friends, let us not turn again to this land,
Not for all the world's gold,
For into this cave must I creep
And turn to the earth, and there to sleep.
BEAUTY [*in horrified tone*]. What? Into the grave? Alas!
EVERYMAN. Yea, there shall you consume, more and less.

BEAUTY. And what, should I smother here?
EVERYMAN. Yea, by my faith, and never more appear.
BEAUTY. I cross out all this; adieu, by Saint John;
I take my cap in my lap and am gone. [*Exit.*
EVERYMAN. Alas, whereto may I trust?
Beauty goeth fast away hie;
She promised with me to live and die.
STRENGTH. Everyman, I will thee also forsake and deny;
Thy game liketh me not at all.
EVERYMAN. Why, then ye will forsake me all.
Sweet Strength, tarry a little space.
STRENGTH. Nay, sir, by the Rood of grace.
Ye be old enough, I understand,
Your pilgrimage to take on hand;
Thou art but a fool to complain,
You spend your speech and waste your brain;
Go, thrust ye into the ground. [*Exit.*
EVERYMAN. I had gone surer I should you have found.
He that trusteth in his Strength,
She deceiveth him in the length.
Both Strength and Beauty forsaketh me,
Yet they promised me fair and lovingly.
DISCRETION. Everyman, I will after Strength be gone,
As for me, I will leave you alone.
EVERYMAN. Why, Discretion, will ye forsake me?
DISCRETION. Yea, in faith, I will go from thee,
For when Strength goeth before,
I follow after evermore. [*Exit.*
EVERYMAN. Oh, all thing faileth, save God alone;
Beauty, Strength, and Discretion;
For when Death bloweth his blast,
They all run from me in full fast.
FIVEWITS. Everyman, my leave now of thee I take;
I will follow the other, for here thee I forsake. [*Exit.*
EVERYMAN. Oh, Jesu, help, all hath forsaken me!
GOOD-DEEDS. Nay, Everyman, I will bide with thee,
I will not forsake thee indeed.
Thou shalt find me a good friend at need.
EVERYMAN. Gramměrcy, Good-deeds; now may I true friends see.
Knowledge, will ye forsake me also?

KNOWLEDGE. Yea, Everyman, when ye to Death do go;
But not yet, for no manner of danger.
EVERYMAN. Grammèrcy, Knowledge, with all my heart.
KNOWLEDGE. Yea, yet I will not from hence depart,
Till I see where ye shall be come.
EVERYMAN. Methinketh, alas, that I must be gone,
To make my reckoning and my debts pay,
For I see my time is nigh spent away.
Take example, all ye that this do hear or see,
How they that I loved best do forsake me,
Except my Good-deeds that bideth truly.
GOOD-DEEDS. All earthly things is but vanity:
Beauty, Strength, and Discretion, do man forsake,
Foolish friends and kinsmen, that fair spake,
All flee-eth save Good-deeds, and that am I.
EVERYMAN. Have mercy on me, God most mighty:
And stand by me, thou Mother and Maid, Holy Mary.
GOOD-DEEDS. Fear not, I will speak for thee.
EVERYMAN. Here I cry God mercy.
GOOD-DEEDS. Short our end, and minish our pain,
Let us go and never come again.
EVERYMAN [*descending out of sight with* GOOD-DEEDS]. Into Thy hands, Lord, my soul I commend;
Receive it, Lord, that it be not lost;
As Thou me broughtest, so me defend,
That I may appear with that blessed host
That shall be saved at the day of doom.

[*They vanish.* KNOWLEDGE *stands looking after them. A joyful hymn, such as the "Adeste, Fideles" or "Te Deum," is heard off.*

LIKE WILL TO LIKE

(*Before* 1568)

"An Interlude, made by Ulpian Fulwell, very godly and full of pleasant mirth. Wherein is declared not only what punishment followeth those that will rather follow licentious living, than to esteem and follow good counsel; and what great benefits and commodities they receive that apply them unto virtuous living and good exercises."

Nicholas Newfangle, the Vice, has received a commission from Lucifer to go through the world bringing similar persons

together, like to like. After various adventures he meets Cuthbert Cutpurse and Pierce Pickpurse, to whom he gives news of a piece of land which has fallen to them by unexpected succession. The three adjourn to an alehouse, leaving the stage to Virtuous Living, who is rewarded by Good Fame and Honour for having chidden Nicholas for his sins. When they go out Nicholas re-enters with Judge Severity, to whom he hands over Cuthbert and Pierce, explaining that their piece of land is the gallows. Hankin Hangman takes possession of his victims, and the Devil carries Newfangle off on his back. Virtuous Living, Honour, and Good Fame conclude the play with prayers for the Queen and the Government.

Dress should be medieval; the Devil was always clothed in bearskin, and the Vice must have a wooden dagger; the names of Lucifer and the Vice, and often of other characters as well, were usually painted in large letters on their chest and back. It must be played in rollicking, pantomime spirit, and as much 'business' should be introduced as can possibly be devised. The Vice and the Devil particularly must cut capers, dance, and pull faces. No scenery or properties are necessary, but a medieval audience should be represented on the stage, as well as the players of the interlude itself.

"*Here entereth* NICHOLAS NEWFANGLE, *the Vice, laughing, and hath a knave of clubs in his hand, which, as soon as he speaketh, he offereth to one of the men or boys standing by.*" [1]

NEWFANGLE. Ha, ha, ha, ha! Now like unto like: it will be none other;
Stoop, gentle knave, and take up your brother.
Why, is every one here so greatly unkind
That I am no sooner out of sight than quite out of mind?
Marry, this will make a man even weep for woe,
That on such a sudden no man will let me know,
Sith men be so dangerous[2] now at this day;
Yet are women kind worms, I dare will say.
[*To one of the audience*] How say you, woman? You that stand in the angle,
Were you never acquainted with Nicholas Newfangle?
Know you me now? I thought at the last
All acq aintance from Nichol Newfangle is not past.
Nichol Newfangle was, and is, and ever shall be,
And there are but few that are not acquainted with me.

["*Here the* DEVIL *entereth, but speaketh not yet.*" *He is*

[1] *I.e.*, in the audience. [2] suspicious.

wrapped in his bearskin, and capers about in a grotesque manner.

Sancta benedicite! What have we here?
Tom Tumbler, or else some dancing bear?
For aught that I see, it is my godfather Lucifer,
Whose prentice I have been this many a day.
But no words but mum: you shall hear what he will say.

[LUCIFER *discloses his name painted on his chest.*

LUCIFER. Ho! Mine own boy, I am glad that thou art here!

NEWFANGLE [“*pointing to one standing by*”]. He speaketh to you, sir, I pray you come near.

LUCIFER [*to* NEWFANGLE]. Nay, thou art even he, of whom I am well apaid.[1]

NEWFANGLE [*shrinking away*]. Then speak aloof, for to come nigh I am afraid.

LUCIFER. Nay, come to me, boy, and bless thee I will,
And see that my precepts thou do fulfil.

NEWFANGLE [*still keeping out of reach*]. Well, Godfather, if you will say ought to me in this case,
Speak, for in faith I mean not to kneel to that ill face.

LUCIFER. Well, boy, it shall not greatly skill[2]
Whether thou stand or whether thou kneel.
Thou knowest I am both proud and arrogant,
And with the proud I will ever be conversant.
I cannot abide to see men that are vicious
Accompany themselves with such as be virtuous,
Wherefore my mind is, since thou thy part canst play,
That thou adjoin like unto like alway.

NEWFANGLE. Tush, tush, Godfather Devil, for that have thou no care,
Thou knowest that “Like will to like, quoth the Deril to the Collier.”
And thou shalt see that such match I shall make anon,
That thou shalt say I am thy good-good, sweet-sweet godson.

LUCIFER. Thou art mine own boy; my blessing shalt thou have.

NEWFANGLE. By my truth, Godfather, that blessing I do not crave.

LUCIFER. But thou shalt salute me ere I go, doubtless,
That in thy doings thou shalt have the better success.

[1] satisfied. [2] matter.

NEWFANGLE [*kneeling down*]. What shall I say, O bottle-nosed Godfather, canst thou tell?

LUCIFER. "All hail, O noble Prince of Hell!"

NEWFANGLE. All my dames cows'-tails fell down the well.

LUCIFER. I will exalt thee above the clouds.

NEWFANGLE. I will salt thee, and hang thee in shrouds.

LUCIFER. Thou art the enhancer of my renown.

NEWFANGLE. Thou art Hance, the hangman of Calais town.

LUCIFER. Amen.

NEWFANGLE. Amen. [*He rises.*

LUCIFER. Now farewell, boy, farewell heartily.

[*He looks round the audience.*

Is there never a knave here will keep the Devil company?

NEWFANGLE. Farewell, Godfather, for thou must go alone.

[*Exit* LUCIFER.

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! [*He sings and dances.*
Now he is gone, and I am left alone,
Myself here to solace.
What sayst thou, gentle Joan? Why begin you to moan?
Though he be gone I am in place.

And now will I dance, and now will I prance,
For why, I have none other work.
Snip, snap, butter is no bone meat;
Knave's flesh is no pork.

I trow you shall see some knaves come to me,
Which whensoever they do,
They shall have their meed, as they deserve indeed,
As you shall shortly see these two.

But mark well this game, I see this gear[1] frame;
Lo, who cometh now in such haste?
It is Cuthbert Cutpurse, and Pierce Pickpurse.
Give room now, at little cast.[2] [*He goes aside.*

[*Enter* CUTHBERT CUTPURSE *with a knife and a handful of money, and* PIERCE PICKPURSE, *also jingling money in his hand.*

NEWFANGLE [*to the audience*]. See to your purses, masters, and be ruled by me,

[1] matter. [2] space.

For knaves are abroad, and therefore beware.
You are warned : an' ye take not heed, I do not care.
CUTHBERT. How sayest thou, Pierce Pickpurse, art thou not agreed
These two booties equally to divide?
NEWFANGLE [*coming forward*]. My masters, here is a good fellow that would fain have some.
CUTHBERT. What, Nichol Newfangle, be you come?
So help me, I am glad with all my heart,
And of this booty you shall have your part.
NEWFANGLE. I thank you both even heartily, I trow.
And I can tell you news, which you do not know.
But first tell me this, Pierce Pickpurse,
Which is the elder, thou or Cuthbert Cutpurse?
PIERCE. In faith, I think we are both of one age, well nigh.
But wherefore ask you? I pray you, tell me why?
NEWFANGLE. I will tell you the cause without any delay,
For a piece of land is fallen, as I hear say,
Which by succession must come to one of you.
A proper plot it is, this is most true.
There if you will come anon unto me,
I will put you in possession, and that you shall see.
CUTHBERT. Then, brother Pierce, we may think ourselves happy
That ever we were with him acquainted.
PIERCE. Aye, but, brother Cuthbert, is it not best
To go in for a while, and make some feast?
CUTHBERT. What say you, Nichol?
NEWFANGLE. I do agree.

[*They go out, singing this song. As they go,* VIRTUOUS LIVING *enters and stands watching them.*

Good hostess, lay a crab in the fire,[1] and broil a mess of souse-a,
For I will not spare for any cost, till I be drunk as a mouse-a.
VIRTUOUS LIVING. O wicked imps, that have such delight
In evil conversation, wicked and abominable!
And from virtue's love withdraw yourselves quite,
And lean to vice most vile and detestable!
How deaf we be good counsel to hear!
How little we have God's threats in fear!

[1] roast an apple (to flavour the drink).

Enter GOOD FAME

GOOD FAME. O Virtuous Life, God rest you merry,
To you am I come for to attend.
VIRTUOUS LIFE. Good Fame, ye are welcome heartily.
And since God did you hither send,
Let us give thanks to him with humbleness,
And persuade with all men their lives to amend.

Enter GOD'S PROMISE *and* HONOUR

GOD'S PROMISE. God rest you merry both, and God be your guide.
HONOUR. We are now come to the place where we must abide.
And from you, Virtuous Life, I, Honour, may not slide.
GOD'S PROMISE. I am God's Promise, which is a thing eterne,
A sure foundation to such as will learn.
GOOD FAME. Since God's Promise hath brought Honour into place,
I will for awhile leave you three alone:
For I must now depart for a little space,
But I shall come to you again anon. [*Exit* GOOD FAME.
HONOUR. Let us three sing to God with one accord.
GOD'S PROMISE. To sing praises unto God, it liketh well me.
VIRTUOUS LIVING. And I also with you do thereto agree.
A pleasant noise to God's ears it must needs bring,
That God's Promise, Honour, and Virtuous Life do sing.
[*They sing.*

Life is but short, hope not therein;
Virtue unended seek for to win.
Whoso to virtue doth apply
Good Fame and Honour must obtain,
And also live eternally,
For Virtuous Life this is the gain. [*Exeunt.*

Enter NEWFANGLE *and* JUDGE SEVERITY

SEVERITY. Now, friend, it appeareth unto me
That you have been a traveller of the country.
How say you, my friend, can you tell me any news?
NEWFANGLE. That can I, for I come lately from the stews.
[*Looking round*] But no words, mum, and stand awhile aside;
Yonder cometh two knaves, therefore abide. [*They stand aside.*

Enter CUTHBERT *and* PIERCE

PIERCE. If Nichol Newfangle help us not in our need,
We are like in our business full evil to speed.

[NEWFANGLE *and* SEVERITY *advance.*

NEWFANGLE. Soft, my masters, awhile, I you pray.

CUTHBERT. For the Passion of God, Master Nichol, help us to rid away;
And help us to the land, whereof you did say.

NEWFANGLE. Marry, I will help you, I swear by All Hallows,
And will not part from you till you come to the gallows.
Lo, noble Severity, these be they without doubt
On whom this rumour of thieving is gone about.

[*He puts halters round their necks.*

SEVERITY [*helping to tie their hands and gag them*]. Strive not, your words have condemned you to die;
Therefore, to God make yourselves ready.
[*To* NEWFANGLE] Now they are bound, I will send one to you anon
Shall lead them to the place of execution. [*Exit.*

NEWFANGLE. Ah, my masters, how like you this play?
You shall take possession of your land to-day!

Enter HANKIN HANGMAN

Come, Hankin Hangman, let us two cast lots,
And between us divide a couple of coats.

[*They take off the prisoners' coats.*

HANGMAN. Thou shouldst have one, Nichol, I swear by the Mass,
For thou bringest work for me daily to pass.
Therefore, Nichol Newfangle, we will part never,
For "Like will to like, quoth the Devil to the Collier."

NEWFANGLE. Now farewell, Hankin Hangman, farewell to thee.

HANGMAN. Farewell, Nichol Newfangle. Come you two with me. [*He leads them out.*

NEWFANGLE. Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! ["*The Devil entereth.*"

LUCIFER. Ho, ho, ho! Mine own boy, make no more delay,
But leap up on my back straightway. [*Business.*

NEWFANGLE. Then who shall hold my stirrup while I go to horse?

LUCIFER. Tush, for that do thou not force!
Leap up, I say, leap up quickly.

NEWFANGLE. Woh, Ball, woh ! And I will come by and by.
Farewell, my masters, till I come again,
For now I must make a journey into Spain.

[*"He rideth away on the Devil's back. Here entereth* VIRTUOUS LIFE *and* HONOUR."

VIRTUOUS LIFE. O worthy diadem, O jewel most precious,
O virtue, which dost all worldly things excel!
How worthy a treasure thou art to the virtuous!
Thy praise no pen may write, nor no tongue tell.
The commodity of virtue in me you may behold,
The enormity of vice you have also seen :
Therefore now to make an end we may be bold,
And pray for our noble and gracious Queen.

HONOUR. To do so, Virtuous Life, it is our bounden duty ;
And to aid us therein, Good Fame cometh verily.

Enter GOOD FAME

GOOD FAME. Virtuous Life, do what you list:
To pray or to sing, I will you assist.

VIRTUOUS LIFE. O Lord of Hosts, O King Almighty,
Pour down Thy grace upon our noble Queen!
Vanquish her foes, Lord, that daily and nightly,
Through her, Thy laws may be sincerely seen.

HONOUR. The honourable council also, O Lord, preserve,
The lords both of the clergy, and the temporality ;
Grant that with meekness they may Thee serve,
Submitting to Thee with all humility.

GOOD FAME. O Lord, preserve the Commons of this realm also ;
Pour upon them Thy heavenly grace ;
To advance virtue and vice to overthrow,
That at last in heaven with Thee they may have place.

The following are recommended for study :

MIRACLE PLAYS. Any of the miracle plays in the four cycles mentioned above, particularly *The Deluge* (1390–1420), *Abraham and Isaac* (1470–80), *The Nativity* (1416), *The Temptation* (*c.* 1350), *The Betrayal* (*c.* 1350), and *The Crucifixion* (*c.* 1350).

MORALITIES. *Everyman* (*c.* 1490). *The Castell of Perseverance* (fifteenth century). *The Nice Wanton* (fifteenth century).

INTERLUDES. *Hick Scorner* (anon.) (1485–1509). *The World and the Child* (anon.) (1485–1509). *The Pardoner and the Friar* (John Heywood) (*c.* 1520). *The Four P's* (John Heywood) (*c.* 1545).

Plays before Shakespeare ("Kings' Treasuries," Dent).

Everyman, with other Interludes and Miracle Plays ("Everyman" edition, Dent).

Oxford Treasury of English Literature, vol. ii (Oxford University Press).

CHAPTER II

SHAKESPEARE'S PREDECESSORS

I. Comedy. The principal weakness of all plays up to the end of the sixteenth century was in plot. This was an inevitable corollary of the nature of those plays. The story of the miracle plays was quite undramatic as a whole: the incidents of the Saints' plays varied but little, and their *dénouement* was a foregone conclusion; and the interlude, as its name implies, originally aimed at being no more than a temporary diversion, and maintained this character even when it began to be performed independently. Plot, and to a less degree diction and form of language, were all that were now wanting for comedy, and the inspiration that supplied these came not from within, but from without. Up to this time the growth of the dramatic idea in England had been entirely independent, and it is not until the sixteenth century, the time of the Renaissance, when a burning enthusiasm for knowledge and beauty led men to study the arts and literatures of other European nations and the classic glories of past ages, that we find any trace of outside influence. We must remember that the Renaissance reached England late—that Southern Europe had already steeped herself for a century or more in classical art and literature, and that therefore English writers had a hundred years of experiment in Italy and Spain to help them as well as the masterpieces of Greece and Rome. Moreover, this outside influence came exactly when it was needed. English drama had reached a dead stop; constant experiments were made, but though they were different

they showed little improvement, and no dramatist of genius had arisen great enough either to solve the difficult problem of constructing a dramatic plot, or to find a language, dignified yet virile, that would steer a middle course between rhetoric and ' back-chat.'

Early in the sixteenth century a Spanish romance in twenty-one acts, called *Calisto and Melibea*, half novel and half play, took Europe by storm. An English version of this, published in 1530, is the first play that shows any true sense of dramatic form. This, and other experiments in adapting foreign plays, opened men's eyes to the possibilities of the new structure, based on some recognition of the principle of climax, the rhythm of act-divisions, and the unities of place, time, and action. When they turned to classical models they found all their difficulties solved—solved, perhaps, in a manner too ruthless for the luxuriant growth of English drama, as the modifications of succeeding dramatists will show; but the classical model provided just the framework that the formless interludes and moralities lacked. Between 1541 and 1553 Nicholas Udall, Headmaster of Eton, wrote a comedy called *Ralph Roister-Doister*, strictly constructed on the models of Plautus and Terence. It was acted by the scholars of Eton. He called it an interlude, and his audiences probably thought of it as nothing more than an unusually good interlude, little dreaming that it was the germ of the true English comedy; for besides preserving the structural qualities of a work of art it shows a refinement of language and action that none of the earlier interludes possesses. And it is only in construction that it is classical. It is remarkable that the sudden enthusiasm for the classics in the sixteenth century did almost nothing to impair the essentially English quality of characterization, humour, language, and setting in plays. *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, produced at Christ's College, Cambridge, about 1550, is similarly constructed, but

the characterization is less thoughtful, and there is no aim at refinement.

It is noticeable that the educational value of the drama was rated very high. Most of the acting was done by schools and colleges, and besides the two plays mentioned above there were many written and produced at such places. At Queens' College, Cambridge, in 1546, expulsion was decreed for any student who refused to act in a play once a year, or failed to attend the performance. And it is to the universities that we owe the next step in the development of the drama. Between 1584 and 1594 a group of men, now generally known as the "University Wits," took up play-writing as a serious profession, and it was they who first gave to English drama the literary quality that it has possessed ever since. As a comedy-writer, the most important of them was John Lyly (author of *Euphues*, the most ambitious of the early attempts at artistic English prose). The difference between the interludes and Lyly's plays is amazing. Comedy is lifted with one sweep from the village to the Court; Hodge and Dame Chat give place to Arcadian nymphs and swains, gods and goddesses, and gracious, cultured courtiers. Lyly embodied the prevailing literary taste: wit was the object of existence; word-play, philosophy, intellectual and refined conversation, and romantic intrigue were the order of the day. In spite of his faults, such as over-elaboration of language, poor story, undramatic (and often untheatric) incident, tedious conversation and punning, and affectation of all kinds, Lyly rendered inestimable service to English comedy. He made it intellectual, and he established prose as a medium for dramatic dialogue—for all but one of his eight plays are in prose. He also transferred the interest from action to dialogue, an emphasis particularly fortunate at that time, when horseplay and buffoonery were regarded as the natural form of comedy. Action, the true medium of drama, will

always assert itself; Lyly, in stressing the importance and possibilities of skilful and artistic dialogue, was the forerunner of Congreve, Sheridan, and Wilde, and the first to experiment with what we call 'high comedy.' His influence on his followers was immense. It is evident that Shakespeare read him closely; *Love's Labour's Lost* is a direct imitation in both method and detail.

His two most important colleagues in comedy-writing were Robert Greene and George Peele. Peele wrote charming verse when he wrote with care, but he lacked individuality, and his work is uneven. Greene concentrated on action rather than dialogue, and his work was thus fortunately complementary to that of Lyly. His blank verse and his loud, highly coloured language resemble those of Marlowe, without Marlowe's genius for phrase and rhythm. His plays, though constructed with considerable efficiency, set a fashion of complexity of plot that was followed too readily by many of his successors. He wrote historical tragedies of considerable power, besides his comedies.

The comedies of the University Wits were written for a small, cultivated audience, and were performed chiefly by boy-actors in private houses and at Court. But they quickly found favour with the general public, and resulted in a great improvement in popular drama and public taste. Audiences were beginning to demand more than mere farce, and to expect excitement, spectacle, verbal ingenuity, poetry, and sympathetic presentation of character. And, imperfect though the plays of these authors were, they prepared both audiences and actors for the great enchantments that were to follow, familiarizing them with the means by which those enchantments were to be wrought, such as disguisings, misunderstanding, fairies, magicians, saucy pages, comic servants, and braggart soldiers. Plays for the people began to be written by authors of better education, and drama improved rapidly, particularly in construction.

II. Tragedy. Comedy developed more quickly than tragedy. The moralities contained the germ of the tragic idea, but religious optimism refused to allow evil ever to triumph, even apparently, and no one yet had the vision to see spiritual good shining through temporal evil, as, for instance, in *Hamlet* or in the last scene of *King Lear*. But the moralities developed chiefly into comedy; tragedy had to wait until the interlude was purged of this traditional triumph of virtue and the author was free to handle his plot as he chose. Such freedom, when it came, proved too much for the dramatists of the time—their plays degenerated into low comedy and sensational melodrama. But eventually they turned, as the comedy-writers turned, to classical models.

Greek tragedy had reached an advanced stage of development in the hands of Æschylus, though that development was within definitely prescribed and somewhat narrow limits. It was constructed with extreme care and with thorough grasp of the essentials of real tragedy.[1] These more subtle and theoretical principles, however, seem not to have been grasped until the time of Shakespeare, when the more practical difficulties of construction and proportion had been to some extent mastered. It was the practical methods of Greek tragedy that proved of chief interest to the first English tragedy-writers, and that had the most marked effect upon their work. Briefly stated, these were the use of the chorus to emphasize incidents of dramatic importance, point morals, and describe what could not be adequately represented; set speeches of considerable length, varied by *stichomuthia*, or single-line dialogue; the absence of action from the stage, the story being carried on chiefly by report and comment; a sense of divine retribution for sin; a marked poetic quality in both thought and language; and a rhythmical proportion and careful arrange-

[1] See Introduction.

ment of climax in the play as a whole. To these the Latin dramatist Seneca, whose method in particular was used by the first English tragedy-writers as a model, added a system of division into acts and scenes, a new character known as the Ghost, and insistence on the unities of time, place, and action.[1]

In 1561 Thomas Preston wrote a comedy called *Cambyses*, directly modelled on Seneca's tragedy, except that action was still allowed full play. This play showed considerable advance in construction, but it was pure melodrama, relying for its effect on such incidents as the flaying of a man with a false skin. The first real tragedy was *Gorboduc*, written by Thomas Sackville and Thomas Norton in 1562. This play is divided into five acts, there are speeches of inordinate length, and it follows the canon of Greek tragedy as closely as possible. Even thus early, however, it was felt that the purely static conception of drama was unsuitable to English ideas, and although they excluded action as far as possible from the dialogue the authors contrived a compromise by introducing a symbolical dumb-show before each act. This device was used for many years, and was of considerable value in the evolution of the normal drama of later times, when full use was made of both action and dialogue simultaneously. *Gorboduc* was also the first play to be written in regular blank verse, which afterward became the universal medium for tragedy.[2]

[1] The 'unities' have always been insisted on in what is termed 'classical' drama (as opposed to romantic). Unity of time means that the acting time of a play must be the same as the time occupied by the incidents represented, including the intervals between them. Unity of place means that the scene must not be changed further than is possible in the time—two rooms in the same house are allowable, but not Rome followed immediately by Egypt. Unity of action means that there must be no complication by sub-plot.

[2] It became so because its rhythm is the closest poetical rhythm to that of ordinary English speech, as can be seen in Shakespeare's greatest tragedies, where the utterances are sublime poetry and

Other early attempts at tragedy need not detain us until we come to the work of the University Wits. The plays of Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe, the two most important tragedy-writers in this group, show an even greater advance than the comedies of Lyly and Greene. Tragedy fails if it does not arouse intense emotions of horror, grief, or pity, and to do this many elements are needed which the tragedy-writers did not possess; the chief of these are strong plot, overwhelming catastrophe, clear characterization (evoking definite sensations such as love, hatred, pity, contempt, in the minds of the audience), impressive scenes, noble and sonorous verse, and sublime language. All these are to be found, in some degree, in the work of Kyd and Marlowe, crude though their plays appear in comparison with the tragedies of Shakespeare and of those who had Shakespeare to learn from.

Kyd's only important achievement is *The Spanish Tragedy*, a continuation of the story of *Jeronimo*, an inferior play which is usually ascribed to him. He has also been said to have written a *Hamlet*, upon which Shakespeare based his play. *The Spanish Tragedy* was written about 1589, and, for that date, it is a triumph of dramatic genius, and was an instant success. The numerous incidents and interests are adroitly subordinated to the main theme, which is handled with remarkable skill, and the catastrophe is both overwhelming and just. The details are all in harmony, and real under-

yet perfectly natural. Burke often dropped unconsciously into blank verse in his more impassioned moments; we do so ourselves under the stress of excitement. Even apart from excitement, it can easily be seen how close our colloquial speech is to blank verse by taking a few ordinary remarks at random:

"And have you booked your passage on the boat?"
"Yes: and my things are ready in the hall."
"I spent the week-end with a friend of mine."

Thus it is clear that blank verse is particularly suited to the stage, where everything has to be presented in a form closely akin to the experience of life, and yet rarefied and condensed, made more emphatic, more significant, and more memorable.

standing is shown of the use of such subtle devices as climax, contrast, and irony. The characters are vividly conceived, the incidents are fearful and horrible without being disgusting or barbarous, and the language is usually adequate and occasionally noble. Kyd's verse is original, and often extremely effective and fortunate: but the rimed passages are tiresome, and the blank verse frequently uncertain and halting. The play contains many faults—in a tragedy written in 1588 it could hardly be otherwise; but in the respects mentioned it far surpasses anything that preceded it.

The work of Marlowe, Shakespeare's friend, fellow-actor, and possible collaborator, was nearest to Shakespearean drama in both time and quality. His individual poetic genius created literature which, like Shakespeare's, is for all time, and we read his plays not only, as we read those of most of his predecessors, for their historic significance, but for the beauty and immensity of his finest poetry and greatest scenes. His characters are intensely alive, they move among events of supreme significance, and speak in a language and a rhythm which has not been excelled in our language by any dramatist except Shakespeare. Both Marlowe and Kyd were singularly lacking in humour; but this defect, though it narrows their scope and their sympathy, makes the presentation of deep emotions, which was all that they aimed at, the more vivid and inspiring. Marlowe's blank verse was still hampered by the traditions of regular accent and the end-stop line, which even Shakespeare did not break down till half-way through his career; yet within these limits it is finer than one would believe possible in so restricted a form. But it is the passionate idea that underlies all Marlowe's work, and is reflected in his plots, his characters, and his very style, that has placed him among the great figures in our literature. That idea, the embodiment of all that was finest in the enthusiastic and

exhilarating aspiration of the Renaissance, is the illimitable power of human ability; Marlowe conceives man equal to his loftiest ideals, able to climb to the highest point of his thoughts, capable of achieving what he will and of overcoming all obstacles, except the one grim power that is stronger than himself—Death. It is difficult to imagine a more perfect tragic idea than this; the hero sweeps all before him in his magnificent determination and self-reliance, irrespective of virtue or wickedness, till he approaches the last gate, confident that his strength will suffice to open it; and he finds it locked and keyless.

In spite of his brilliant vision and inspired language, Marlowe's work is far from perfect. Though pity has become an important element in tragedy, disproportionate use is still made of horror. In dramatic construction he is uncertain—not equal, for instance, to Kyd—and the plays are often mismanaged. Irrelevant scenes, such as the incongruous low comedy in *Doctor Faustus*,[1] are often introduced: it may be said of nearly all his work (except of *Edward II*, his most effective play) that it lacks harmony. His merits are displayed in isolated passages. We must remember that he died young; a study of the work of any great artist—Shakespeare, Beethoven, Shelley—gives abundant proof that it is only genius wedded to experience that can produce sustained sublimity. But these faults melt into insignificance when we realize what we have gained, and this gain is best summed up in the words freedom and intensity. A play has now become interesting for the intensive study of a few vividly imagined characters: incident is no longer of intrinsic importance, but serves only to illustrate the destinies of the persons on whom our attention is fixed. We watch the decay of goodness by

[1] These scenes are probably due to the traditional presentation of the Devil of the moralities, and are an interesting example of drama in its transitional stage.

the action of a poisonous thought, but the struggle is now between will and circumstance, not necessarily, as in the old plays, between perfect good and utter evil. The plot has undergone similar intensification, and bears the characters along to their appointed doom with resistless evolution. Language has become both more human and more sublime, as occasion requires, and verse, though not yet handled with complete freedom, is an aid and not a hindrance to expression.

III. History. Many historical, or 'chronicle,' plays were written about this time; Greene's *James IV* is fairly typical of the best of them. In general they were a direct continuation of the methods of the old miracle plays. The insistence upon naturalness of character in such plays undoubtedly did much to humanize and enliven Elizabethan drama, but the custom of representing historical fact by scenes arranged merely in order of time popularized a form which disregarded the skilful construction of plot; this did much to retard the development of perfect drama, as we see from Shakespeare's early plays. None of the authors of chronicle plays had the courage or the genius to mould history into tragic form, as did Marlowe and Shakespeare.

IV. The Stage. By the middle of the sixteenth century acting had passed out of the hands of the trade-gilds into those of small travelling companies of professional actors—sometimes consisting of only four or five men and a few boys. Women were not allowed to appear on the stage till after the Restoration. In 1572 all unlicensed players were prohibited as vagrants, and licences were granted only to companies under royal or noble protection, such as the Queen's, or the Lord Chamberlain's, or the Earl of Leicester's. Such companies, besides acting at Court and in their patrons' houses, occasionally travelled, but still had to obtain local licences from municipal authorities. The usual places for public performances were inn-yards, on the model

of which the first theatres were constructed. Court performances were occasionally given by young men of rank, and by members of the Inns of Court or of the universities, and the public schools had a high reputation for acting. Large sums were spent on such performances, and the writers of Court drama, such as Lyly, had every advantage of production known in their day. But Marlowe and others who wrote for the public stage had little but the bare boards, and until 1572 not even a building specially designed for acting. In the provinces playhouses were built earlier than this, but the growing power of Puritanism and the fear of the plague caused a steady opposition on the part of the City authorities to public performances in London. So in 1572 the Earl of Leicester's company built "The Theater" outside the City boundary, and others soon followed. The structure and conditions of these theatres will be treated in the next chapter.

RALPH ROISTER-DOISTER

Nicholas Udall

(1541–53)

This play is in five acts, each divided into scenes, and develops the story clearly and methodically. Acts I and II are occupied by the unsuccessful efforts of Ralph ("a vainglorious, cowardly blockhead") to win the love of Dame Christian Custance, who is betrothed to an absent sea-captain. Matthew Merrygreeke, an ingenious and unscrupulous mischief-maker (the unmistakable Vice of the interludes), pretends to help him, but contrives to make him appear always ridiculous. In Act III, by mispunctuating a letter from Ralph to Dame Custance, he disposes of all possible chance of success on the part of Ralph. In Act IV the disgruntled Ralph attacks the house of Dame Custance, but is driven off by a bevy of maids with distaffs and broomsticks. In Act V the sea-captain appears, and the play ends with the usual extremely unlikely forgiveness and good-fellowship between friend and foe alike.

No scenery is required, and the costumes should be simple Elizabethan country dress.

Act I, Scene iii

Outside DAME CUSTANCE'S *house. Old* MADGE MUMBLECRUST, *Dame Custance's nurse, is spinning on the distaff.* TIBET TALKAPACE, *a maid, is sewing. She works very idly, and constantly gets up and fidgets about. During the first few lines* RALPH *enters, and stands watching them unperceived.*

MADGE. If this distaff were spun, Margery Mumblecrust——

TIBET. Where good stale ale is will drink no water, I trust.

MADGE. Dame Custance hath promised us good ale and white bread.

TIBET. If she keep not promise, I will beshrew her head:
But it will be stark night before I shall have done.

[*She puts down her work and gets up.*

RALPH [*aside*]. I will stand here awhile and talk with them anon.
I hear them speak of Custance, which doth my heart good.
To hear her name spoken doth even comfort my blood.

MADGE. Sit down to your work, Tibet, like a good girl.

TIBET. Nurse, meddle you with your spindle and your whirl,
No haste but good, Madge Mumblecrust, for whip and whur,[1]
The old proverb doth say, never made good fur.

MADGE. Well, ye will sit down to your work anon, I trust.

TIBET [*sitting down and taking up work, but not sewing*]. Soft fire maketh sweet malt, good Madge Mumblecrust.

MADGE. And sweet malt maketh jolly good ale for the nones.[2]

TIBET. Which will slide down the lane without any bones.

[*Sings.*

Old brown bread crusts must have much good mumbling,
But good ale down your throat hath good easy tumbling.

RALPH [*aside*]. The jolliest wench that ere I heard, little mouse,
May I not rejoice that she shall dwell in my house?

Enter ANNOT ALYFACE, *another maid, knitting*

ANNOT. By Cock, and well sewed, my good Tibet Talkapace.

TIBET. And e'en as well knit, mine own Annot Alyface.

RALPH [*aside, gleefully*]. See what a sort she keepeth that must be my wife!
Shall not I, when I have her, lead a merry life?

[1] hurry, scurry. [2] occasion.

TIBET. Welcome, my good wench, and sit here by me just.
ANNOT. And how doth our old beldame here, Madge Mumblecrust?
TIBET. Chide, and find faults, and threaten to complain.
ANNOT. To make us poor girls shent [1] to her is small gain.
MADGE. I did neither chide, nor complain, nor threaten.
RALPH [*aside*]. It would grieve my heart to see one of them beaten.
MADGE. I did nothing but bid her work and hold her peace.
TIBET. So would I, if you could your clattering cease;
But the Devil cannot make old trot hold her tongue.
ANNOT. Let all these matters pass, and we three sing a song.
[*They sing.*

Pipe, merry Tibet, Annot, and Margery;
Trilla, trilla, trillarie!
Work, etc.
Spin, etc.
Let us see who shall win the victory.

TIBET. This sleeve is not willing to be sewed, I trow.
A small thing might make me all on the ground to throw.
[*The song is repeated.* TIBET *casts down her work.*
There it lieth: the worst is but a curried [2] coat.
Tut, I am used thereto: I care not a groat.
ANNOT. Have we done singing since? Then will I in again;
Here I found you, and here I leave both twain. [*Exit.*
MADGE. And I will not be long after. Tib Talkapace!
TIBET. What is the matter?
MADGE. Yon stood a man all this space.
And hath heard all that ever we spake together.
TIBET. Marry, the more lout he for his coming hither.
And the less good he can to listen maidens talk.
[*Rising*] I care not, and I go bid him hence for to walk:
It were well done to know what he maketh here away.
RALPH [*aside*]. Now might I speak to them, if I wist what to say.
MADGE [*collecting her work*]. Nay, we will go both off, and see what he is.
RALPH [*coming forward*]. One that hath heard all your talk and your singing, I-wis.

[1] scolded. [2] beaten.

I did it for no harm, but for good love I bear
To your Dame Mistress Custance, I did your talk hear.
And, mistress nurse, I will kiss you for acquaintance.

MADGE [*with alacrity*]. I come anon, sir.

TIBET. Faith, I would our Dame Custance
Saw this gear.[1]

MADGE [*wiping her mouth*]. I must first wipe all clean, yea, I must. [*She goes up to* RALPH *and he kisses her.*

TIBET [*aside*]. Ill 'chieve it, doting fool, but it must be cust.[2]

MADGE. God yield you, sir: I had not so much, I wot not when,
Ne'er since I was a child, of such a gay gentleman.

RALPH [*to* TIBET]. I will kiss you too, maiden, for the good will I bear you.

TIBET. No, for sooth, by your leave, ye shall not kiss me.
Ye are but a man, I know very well.

RALPH. Why then?

TIBET. For sooth, for I will not: I use not to kiss men.

RALPH. I use to kiss all them that I love, to God I vow.

TIBET. Yea, sir? I pray you, when did ye last kiss your cow?

RALPH. Nurse is not so nice.[3]

TIBET. Well, I have not been taught to kissing and licking.

RALPH [*to* MADGE]. Yet I thank you, mistress nurse, ye made no sticking.

MADGE. I will not stick for a kiss with such a man as you.

TIBET. They that lust! I will again to my sewing now. [*Exit.*

RALPH. Ah, good sweet nurse!

MADGE. Ah, good sweet gentleman!

RALPH. What?

MADGE. Nay, I cannot tell, sir; but what thing would you?

RALPH. How doth sweet Custance, my heart of gold, tell me how?

MADGE. She doth very well, sir, and command me to you.

RALPH. To me?

MADGE. Yea, to you, sir.

RALPH. To me? Nurse, tell me plain,
To me?

MADGE. She command me to one last day, whoe'er it was.

RALPH. That was e'en to me and none other, by the Mass.

MADGE. I cannot tell you surely, but one it was.

[1] business. [2] shrewish. [3] particular.

RALPH. Bid her sue to me for marriage.
MADGE. E'en so, sir.
RALPH. And surely for thy sake she shall speed.
MADGE. E'en so, sir.
RALPH. And come, hark in thine ear what to say.
MADGE. E'en so, sir.
[" *Here let him tell her a great long tale in her ear.*"

Act III, Scene iv

Scene as before. Enter on one side CHRISTIAN CUSTANCE, *and on the other* MERRYGREEKE *and* RALPH, *the latter hanging back.*

CUSTANCE. What gauding and fooling is this before my door?
MERRYGREEKE. May not folks be honest, pray you, though they be poor?
CUSTANCE. As that thing may be true, so rich folk may be fools.
RALPH [*aside*]. Her talk is as fine as she had learned in schools.
MERRYGREEKE [*to* RALPH]. Look partly toward her, and draw a little near.
CUSTANCE. Get ye home, idle folks.
MERRYGREEKE [*angrily*]. Why may we not be here?
RALPH. Speak gently unto her.
MERRYGREEKE. Ye are too tender-hearted: shall she make us daws?
Nay, dame, I will be plain with you in my friend's cause.
RALPH. Let all this pass, sweetheart, and accept my service.
CUSTANCE. I will not be served with a fool in no wise.
[*To* MERRYGREEKE] I sent him a full answer by you, did I not?
MERRYGREEKE. And I reported it.
CUSTANCE. Let him waste no more labour nor suit about me.
MERRYGREEKE. Ye know not where your preferment lieth, I see.
CUSTANCE. Hold, read it if you can,
And see what letter it is to win a woman.
[*Gives him* RALPH's *letter.*
MERRYGREEKE [*opening and reading it*]. "To mine own dear coney-bird, sweetheart, and pigsny,
Good Mistress Custance, present these by and by."
Of this superscription do ye blame the style?
CUSTANCE. With the rest as good stuff as ye read a great while.

MERRYGREEKE [*continuing*]. "Sweet mistress, whereas I love you nothing at all,
Regarding your substance, and riches chief of all,
For your personage, beauty, demeanour, and wit,
I commend me unto you never a whit.
Sorry to hear report of your good welfare,
For (as I hear say) such your conditions are,
That ye be worthy favour of no living man;
To be abhorred of every honest man.
To be taken for a woman inclined to vice.
Nothing at all to virtue giving her due price.
And now by these presents I do you advertise
That I am minded to marry you in no wise.
I will keep ye right well, from good raiment and fare,
Ye shall not be kept but in sorrow and care.
Ye shall in no wise live at your own liberty;
Do and say what ye lust, ye shall never please me,
But when ye are merry, I will be all sad:
When ye are sorry, I will be very glad.
When ye seek your heart's ease, I will be unkind.
At no time in me shall ye much gentleness find.
Thus, good Mistress Custance, the Lord save you and keep,
From me, Roister-Doister, whether I wake or sleep.
Who favoureth you no less (ye may be bold)
Than this letter purporteth, which ye have unfold."

CUSTANCE. How by this letter of love? Is it not fine?

RALPH. By the arms of Calais, it is none of mine.
Oh, I would I had him here, the which did it indite.

MERRYGREEKE. Why, ye made it yourself, ye told me by this light.

CUSTANCE. I-wis, sir, I would not have sent you such a mock.

RALPH. Ye may so take it, but I meant it not so, by Cock.

MERRYGREEKE. Who can blame this woman to fume, and fret, and rage?
Tut, tut! Yourself now have marred your own marriage.
Well, yet, Mistress Custance, if ye can this remit,
This gentleman otherwise may your love requit.

CUSTANCE. No, God be with you both, and seek no more to me.

[*Exit* CUSTANCE. RALPH *sets up a howl, and is led off by* MERRYGREEKE.

JOHN LYLY

Lyly's plots were not good, nor had he a keen sense of dramatic values. The chief interest in his work is his use of prose, his romantic, delicate treatment of character and incident, and the literary and philosophical quality of his dialogue. The following extracts are intended to illustrate these points.

CAMPASPE

(1584)

This play is based on the story of Alexander's love for Campaspe, a girl of humble birth who was one of his prisoners at the destruction of Thebes. He commissions Apelles, the artist, to paint her portrait, and Apelles and Campaspe fall in love with each other during the sittings. Hephestion, Alexander's general, repeatedly reproaches the world-conqueror for demeaning himself by love for a slave-girl, and Alexander, having assured himself of the love of Apelles and Campaspe by making Apelles believe that his studio is on fire, gives them to each other, dismisses love from his imperial mind with a gesture, and sets off to conquer new worlds. Many famous Greek philosophers are introduced into the play, among them Plato and Diogenes, the Stoic, who believed in nothing but self-realization, and cared for neither god nor king. No scenery or properties are required except the tub of Diogenes and the artist's materials of Apelles. The costumes are Greek : the simple *chiton*, in one piece, can be worn by all the male characters.

Act II, Scene II

DIOGENES *is sitting by his tub. To him enter* ALEXANDER *and* HEPHESTION.

ALEXANDER. Diogenes!

DIOGENES [*without looking up*]. Who calls?

ALEXANDER. Alexander. How happened it that you would not come out of your tub to my palace?

DIOGENES. Because it was as far from my tub to your palace as from your palace to my tub.

ALEXANDER [*astonished, but not angry*]. Why, then, dost thou owe no reverence to kings?

DIOGENES. No.

ALEXANDER. Why so?

DIOGENES. Because they be no gods.

ALEXANDER. They be gods of the earth.

DIOGENES. Yea, gods of earth.

ALEXANDER. Plato is not of thy mind.

DIOGENES. I am glad of it.

ALEXANDER. Why?

DIOGENES. Because I would have none of Diogenes' mind but Diogenes.

ALEXANDER. If Alexander have anything that may pleasure Diogenes, let me know, and take it.

DIOGENES [*motioning him aside*]. Then take not from me that you cannot give me, the light of the world.

ALEXANDER [*moving to one side*]. What dost thou want?

DIOGENES. Nothing that you have.

ALEXANDER. I have the world at command.

DIOGENES. And I in contempt.

ALEXANDER. Thou shalt live no longer than I will.

DIOGENES. But I will die whether you will or no.

ALEXANDER. How should one learn to be content?

DIOGENES. Unlearn to covet.

ALEXANDER. Hephestion, were I not Alexander, I would wish to be Diogenes. Diogenes, when I come this way again, I will both see thee, and converse with thee.

DIOGENES. Do.

[ALEXANDER *and* HEPHESTION *make to go. Enter* CRYSUS, *a Cynic philosopher.* ALEXANDER *and* HEPHESTION *stand watching.*

CRYSUS. One penny, Diogenes, I am a Cynic.

DIOGENES. He made thee a beggar that first gave thee anything.

CRYSUS. Why, if thou wilt give nothing, nobody will give thee.

DIOGENES. I want nothing, till the springs dry, and the earth perish.

CRYSUS. I gather for the gods.

DIOGENES. And I care not for those gods which want money.

CRYSUS. Thou art not a right Cynic that will give nothing.

DIOGENES. Thou art not, that will beg anything.

CRYSUS. Alexander, King Alexander, give a poor Cynic a groat!

ALEXANDER. It is not for a king to give a groat.

CRYSUS. Then give me a talent.

ALEXANDER. It is not for a beggar to ask a talent. Away!

[CRYSUS *goes miserably off.* ALEXANDER, *after a glance at* DIOGENES, *who takes no notice of him, walks majestically off with* HEPHESTION.

ACT III, SCENES III AND IV

APELLES' *studio.* APELLES *is painting* CAMPASPE *on a board.* CAMPASPE *is unhappy at the thought of the all-powerful* ALEXANDER'S *love for her, for already she loves* APELLES, *not* ALEXANDER.

APELLES. I shall never draw your eyes well, because they blind mine.

CAMPASPE [*sadly, for she is a prisoner*]. Why, then, paint me without eyes, for I am blind.

APELLES. Were you ever shadowed[1] before of any?

CAMPASPE. No. And would you could now so shadow me that I might not be perceived of any.

APELLES. It were pity, but that so absolute a face should furnish Venus' temple amongst these pictures.

[*Points to a pile of drawings.*

CAMPASPE. What are these pictures?

APELLES [*bringing them to her*]. This is Europa, whom Jupiter ravished, this Leda, this Alcmena, this Danae, this Antiopa.

CAMPASPE. Were all the gods like this Jupiter?

APELLES. There were many gods in this like Jupiter.

CAMPASPE. I think in those days love was well ratified among men on earth, when lust was so full authorized by the gods in heaven.

APELLES. Nay, you may imagine there were women passing amiable when there were gods exceeding amorous.

CAMPASPE. Were women never so fair, men would be false.

APELLES. Were women never so false, men would be fond. [*Showing her a picture*] This is Venus, the goddess of love.

CAMPASPE. What? Be there also loving goddesses?

APELLES. This is she that hath power to command the very affections of the heart.

CAMPASPE [*softly, looking at* APELLES]. How is she hired, by prayer, by sacrifice, or bribes?

APELLES. By prayer, sacrifice, and bribes.

[1] painted.

CAMPASPE. What prayer?

APELLES. Vows irrevocable.

CAMPASPE. What sacrifice?

APELLES. Hearts ever sighing, never dissembling.

CAMPASPE. What bribes?

APELLES. Roses and kisses: but were you never in love?

CAMPASPE. No.

APELLES. Then have you injured many!

CAMPASPE. How so?

APELLES. Because you have been loved of many.

[*Kneeling by her and taking her hands.*

CAMPASPE [*pulling his hands away*]. Flattered perchance of some.

APELLES. It is not possible that a face so fair, and a wit so sharp, both without comparison, should not be apt to love.

CAMPASPE [*rising*]. If you begin to tip your tongue with cunning, I pray dip your pencil in colours; and fall to that you must do, not that you would do.

[*She gently pushes him back to his stool and poses again; he reluctantly begins to paint.*

Enter ALEXANDER *and* HEPHESTION

ALEXANDER. Now, gentlewoman, doth not your beauty put the painter to his trump?[1]

CAMPASPE. Yes, my lord; seeing so disordered a countenance, he feareth he shall shadow a deformed counterfeit.

ALEXANDER. Would he could colour the life with the feature! [*To* APELLES] Where do you first begin, when you draw any picture?

APELLES. The proportion of the face in just compass, as I can.

ALEXANDER. I would begin with the eye, as a light to all the rest.

APELLES. If you will paint, as you are a king, your Majesty may begin where you please; but as you would be a painter, you must begin with the face.

ALEXANDER. Aurelius would in one hour colour four faces.

APELLES. I marvel in half an hour he did not four.

ALEXANDER. Why, is it so easy?

APELLES. No, but he doth it so homely.[2]

[1] make the painter do his best. [2] crudely.

ALEXANDER. When will you finish Campaspe?

APELLES. Never finish: for always in absolute beauty there is somewhat above art.

ALEXANDER. Why should not I, by labour, be as cunning as Apelles?

APELLES [*turning away*]. God shield you should have cause to be as cunning as Apelles!

ALEXANDER. Lend me thy pencil, Apelles: I will paint, and thou shalt judge.

APELLES [*giving him a crayon*]. Here.

ALEXANDER [*draws on a canvas, but the crayon breaks*]. The coal breaks.

APELLES. You lean too hard.

ALEXANDER. Now it blacks not.

APELLES. You lean too soft.

ALEXANDER. This is awry.

APELLES. Your eye goeth not with your hand.

ALEXANDER. Now it is worse.

APELLES. Your hand goeth not with your mind.

ALEXANDER. Nay, if all be too hard or too soft, so many rules and regards, that one's hand, one's eye, one's mind must all draw together, I had rather be setting of a battle than blotting of a board. But how have I done here [*showing his sketch*]?

APELLES. Like a king.

ALEXANDER. I think so: but nothing more unlike a painter. [*Looking at the portrait*] Well, Apelles, Campaspe is finished as I wish; dismiss her, and bring presently her counterfeit after me.

APELLES. I will.

[APELLES *dismisses* CAMPASPE, *and returns to his painting.*
ALEXANDER *and* HEPHESTION *come down stage.*

ALEXANDER. Now, Hephestion, doth not this matter cotton[1] as I would? Campaspe looketh pleasantly, liberty will increase her beauty, and my love shall advance her honour.

HEPHESTION. I will not contrary your Majesty; for time must wear out that love hath wrought, and reason wean what appetite nursed.

ALEXANDER [*as* CAMPASPE *leaves the room*]. How stately she passeth by, yet how soberly!

HEPHESTION. Let her pass.

[1] succeed.

ALEXANDER. So she shall, for the fairest on the earth.

[ALEXANDER *and* HEPHESTION *go out.* APELLES *continues painting for a few moments, and then sits motionless, gazing at the picture.*

ACT V, SCENE IV

A street near the studio of APELLES. *Enter* ALEXANDER *and* HEPHESTION. *To them enters* APELLES.

ALEXANDER. Here cometh Apelles. Apelles, what piece of work have you in hand?

APELLES. None in hand, if it like your Majesty: but I am devising a platform[1] in my head.

ALEXANDER. I think your hand put it in your head. Is it nothing about Venus?

APELLES. No, but something above Venus.

[ALEXANDER'S PAGE *rushes in excitedly.*

PAGE. Apelles, Apelles, look about you, your shop is on fire!

APELLES [*going*]. Aye me! If the picture of Campaspe be burnt I am undone!

ALEXANDER. Stay, Apelles, no haste; it is your heart is on fire, not your shop; and if Campaspe hang there, I would she were burnt. But have you the picture of Campaspe? Belike you love her well, that you care not though all be lost, so she be safe.

APELLES [*in distress*]. Not love her: but your Majesty knows that painters in their last works are said to excel themselves, and in this I have so much pleased myself, that the shadow as much delighteth me, being an artificer, as the substance doth others that are amorous.

ALEXANDER. You lay your colours grossly: though I could not paint in your shop I can pry into your excuse. [*Seriously, but not unkindly*] Be not ashamed, Apelles, it is a gentleman's sport to be in love. Call hither Campaspe. [*Exit* PAGE.] Methinks I might have been made privy to your affection; though my counsel had not been necessary, yet my countenance might have been thought requisite. But Apelles, forsooth, loveth under hand; yea, and under Alexander's nose, and—but I say no more.

APELLES. Apelles loveth not so: but he liveth to do as Alexander will.

[1] plan for a picture.

Enter CAMPASPE

ALEXANDER. Campaspe, here is news. Apelles is in love with you.

CAMPASPE [*to gain time, not knowing* ALEXANDER'S *intentions, she treats it as a joke*]. It pleaseth your Majesty to say so.

ALEXANDER. Campaspe, for the good qualities I know in Apelles, and the virtue I see in you, I am determined you shall wed one another. How say you, Campaspe? Would you say aye?

CAMPASPE [*without emotion*]. Your handmaid must obey, if you command.

ALEXANDER [*glancing at* HEPHESTION]. I will not enforce marriage where I cannot compel love.

CAMPASPE [*alarmed lest she has gone too far*]. But your Majesty may move a question where you be willing to have a match.

ALEXANDER [*coming between them*]. Apelles, take Campaspe. Why move ye not? Campaspe, take Apelles: will it not be? [*They stand hesitating, uncertain whether he is joking or not.*] Dissemble not, Campaspe; do you love Apelles?

CAMPASPE. Pardon, my lord, I love Apelles.

[*She goes up to* APELLES.

ALEXANDER. Apelles, it were a shame for you, being loved so openly of so fair a virgin, to say the contrary. Do you love Campaspe?

APELLES. Only Campaspe.

ALEXANDER. I perceive, Hephestion, Alexander cannot subdue the affections of men, though he conquer their countries. Well, enjoy one another. I give her thee frankly, Apelles. Thou shalt see that Alexander maketh but a toy of love, and leadeth affection in fetters. Go, Apelles; take with you your Campaspe; Alexander is cloyed with looking on that which thou wonderest at. [*He dismisses them with a gesture: they bow and go out.*] Page, warn the lords to be in readiness; let the trumpet sound, strike up the drum, I will presently into Persia. [*Exit* PAGE.] How now, Hephestion, is Alexander able to resist love as he list?

HEPHESTION. The conquering of Thebes was not so honourable as the subduing of these thoughts.

ALEXANDER. It were a shame Alexander should desire to command the world, if he could not command himself. But come, let us go. And, good Hephestion, when all the world is won, and every country is thine and mine, either find me out another to subdue, or on my word I will fall in love. [*Exeunt.*

ENDIMION

(1591)

Eumenides has to choose between the loss of Semele, his mistress, and Endimion, his friend. Geron, an old man, advises him. The relation of the speech to the play is unimportant, and it should be spoken before a curtain by an old man to a young man. The dresses should be classic and simple.

Act III, Scene iv

GERON. Eumenides, release Endimion, for all things (friendship excepted) are subject to fortune: love is but an eye-worm, which only tickleth the head with hopes and wishes: friendship the image of eternity, in which there is nothing movable, nothing mischievous. As much difference as there is between beauty and virtue, bodies and shadows, colours and life—so great odds is there between love and friendship. Love is a chameleon, which draweth nothing into the mouth but air, and nourisheth nothing in the body but the lungs: believe me, Eumenides, desire dies in the same moment that beauty sickens, and beauty fadeth in the same instant that it flourisheth. When adversities flow then love ebbs; but friendship standeth stiffly in storms. Time draweth wrinkles in a fair face, but addeth fresh colours to a fast friend, which neither heat, nor cold, nor misery, nor place, nor destiny, can alter or diminish. O friendship! Of all things the most rare, and therefore most rare because most excellent, whose comfort in misery is always sweet, and whose counsels in prosperity are ever fortunate.

GORBODUC

Sackville and Norton

(1562)

The first extract given is the dumb-show before the second act. This should be played with deliberation and some over-emphasis of gesture, and with stately and picturesque movements and grouping, as in a dance. Care should be taken to bring out the 'signification,' possibly with the help of a figure as Chorus, commenting in gesture on the action. Bugles or hunting-horns would serve for music.

The Order and Signification of the Dumb-show before the Second Act

"First, the music of cornets began to play, during which came in upon the stage a king, accompanied with a number of his nobility and gentlemen. After he had placed himself in a chair of estate prepared for him, there came and kneeled before him a grave and aged gentleman, and offered up to him a cup of wine in a glass, which the king refused. After him comes a brave and lusty young gentleman, and presents the king with a cup of gold filled with poison, which the king accepted, and drinking the same, immediately fell down dead upon the stage, and so was carried thence away by his lords and gentlemen, and then the music ceased. Hereby was signified, that as glass by nature holdeth no poison, but is clear and may easily be seen through, ne boweth by any art; so a faithful counsellor holdeth no treason, but is plain and open, ne yieldeth to any indiscreet affection, but giveth wholesome counsel, which the ill-advised prince refuseth. The delightful gold filled with poison betokeneth flattery, which under fair seeming of deadly words beareth deadly poison, which destroyeth the prince that receiveth it. As befell in the two brethren, Ferrex and Porrex, who, refusing the wholesome advice of great counsellors, credited these young parasites, and brought to themselves death and destruction thereby."

Gorboduc, King of Britain, divided his realm between his two sons, Ferrex and Porrex. Porrex, the younger, has killed Ferrex. At this point he has just been arraigned before his father, and, in spite of making a speech in his defence of over ninety lines, has been banished. Gorboduc is discussing the situation with his counsellor Arostus, when Marcella, a lady-in-waiting, announces that the Queen has slain Porrex. The Chorus comments suitably upon the events.

The scene (which is here considerably shortened) should be spoken and played with rhetorical intonation and gesture. Costumes mediæval. The Chorus should be spoken by one actor in a black robe.

Act IV, Scene II

GORBODUC *on his throne.* ARostus *and* EUBULUS, *the King's Secretary, are standing by him.*

GORBODUC. Accursed child! What cruel destiny,
What froward fate, hath sorted us this chance,

That even in those where we should comfort find,
Where our delight now in our aged days
Should rest and be, even there our only grief
And deepest sorrows to abridge our life,
Most pining cares and deadly thoughts do grow?

AROSTUS. Your Grace should now, in these grave years of yours,
Have found ere this the price of mortal joys;
How short they be, how fading here in earth,
How full of change, how brittle our estate,
Of nothing sure, save only of the death,
To whom both man and all the world doth owe
Their end at last.

GORBODUC. Many can yield right sage and grave advice
Of patient sprite[1] to others wrapped in woe,
And can in speech both rule and conquer kind:[2]
Who, if by proof they might feel nature's force,
Would show themselves men as they are indeed,
Which now will needs be gods. [*Enter* MARCELLA, *lamenting.*]
But what doth mean
The sorry cheer of her that here doth come?

MARCELLA. Oh, where is ruth? or where is pity now?
Whither is gentle heart and mercy fled?
Are they exiled out of our stony breasts,
Never to make return? is all the world
Drowned in blood, and sunk in cruelty?
If not in women mercy may be found,
If not, alas! within the mother's breast
To her own child, to her own flesh and blood;
If ruth be banished thence, if pity there
May have no place, where should we seek it then?

GORBODUC. Madam, alas, what means your woeful tale?

MARCELLA. Oh, silly woman I! Why to this hour
Have kind and fortune thus deferred my breath,
That I should live to see this doleful day?
Porrex, alas, is by his mother slain,
And with her hand, a woeful thing to tell,
While slumbering on his careful bed he rests,
His heart stabbed in with knife is reft of life.

GORBODUC. Oh, Eubulus, oh, draw this sword of ours,

[1] spirit. [2] nature.

And pierce this heart with speed! O hateful light!
O loathsome life! O sweet and welcome death!
Dear Eubulus, work this, we thee beseech!

EUBULUS. Patient, your Grace; perhaps he liveth yet,
With wound received, but not of certain death.

GORBODUC. Oh, let us then repair unto the place,
And see if Porrex live, or thus be slain.

[*Exeunt all but* MARCELLA.

MARCELLA. Alas, he liveth not! It is too true
That with these eyes, of him, a peerless prince,
Son to a king, and in the flower of youth,
Even with a twink a senseless stock I saw.
What wight is that which saw what I did see,
And could refrain to wail with plaint and tears?
But I will go, for I am grieved anew
To call in mind the wretched father's woe. [*Exit.*

CHORUS.

When greedy lust in royal seat to reign
Hath reft all care of gods and eke of men;
And cruel heart, wrath, treason, and disdain
Within ambitious breast are lodgèd, then
Behold how Mischief wide herself displays,
And with the brother's hand the brother slays.

Blood asketh blood, and death must death requite:
Jove, by his just and everlasting doom,
Justly hath ever so requited it.
The times before record, and times to come
Shall find it true, and so doth present proof
Present before our eyes for our behoof.

THE SPANISH TRAGEDY

THOMAS KYD

(*c.* 1589)

It is difficult to quote usefully from this play, because it is the handling of the long and complicated plot as a single dramatic whole that is of chief interest. However, both the verse and the characterization show an advance on all that has gone before, and both are illustrated in the scene that follows.

Hieronimo, Marshal to the King of Spain, is the most remarkable character. His son has been foully murdered by the King's nephew, Lorenzo, and his mind has become unhinged through grief. In this scene some citizens come to him with petitions to the King, but his brain is too full of his own grief to pay proper attention to them. No scenery is necessary; ordinary Elizabethan costume should be worn.

Act III, Scene xiii

A chamber in the palace. HIERONIMO *moving restlessly about with a book in his hand. To him enters a* SERVANT.

SERVANT. Here are a sort of poor petitioners
That are importunate, and it shall please you, sir,
That you should plead their cases to the King.
HIERONIMO. That I should plead their several actions?
Why, let them enter, and let me see them.
[SERVANT *ushers in* THREE CITIZENS *and an* OLD MAN.
HIERONIMO. Come near, you men that thus importune me.
[*They hesitate.*
Come on, sirs, what's the matter?
[*The* THREE CITIZENS *come forward and give him documents, but the* OLD MAN *stands still muttering.*
FIRST CITIZEN. Ay, sir, and here's my declaration.
SECOND CITIZEN. And here's my band.
THIRD CITIZEN. And here's my lease.
HIERONIMO. But wherefore stands yon silly man so mute,
With mournful eyes and hands to heaven upreared?
Come hither, father, let me know thy cause.
OLD MAN. No, sir, could my woes
Give way unto my most distressful words,
Then should I not in paper, as you see,
With ink bewray what blood began in me. [*Hands him his paper.*
HIERONIMO [*reading*]. What's here? "The humble supplication
Of Don Bazulto for his murdered son."
OLD MAN. Ay, sir.
HIERONIMO [*his manner changes: he has forgotten all about the other petitions*]. No, sir, it was my murdered son:
Oh, my son, my son, my son Horatio!
But mine or thine, Bazulto, be content,
While wretched I in thy mishaps may see
The lively portrait of my dying self. [*Giving him rings, chains, etc.*
And here, take this, and this [*searching*]—what, my purse?—

Ay, this, and that, and all of them are thine;
For all as one are our extremities.

FIRST CITIZEN. Oh, see the kindness of Hieronimo!

SECOND CITIZEN. This gentleness shows him a gentleman.

HIERONIMO [*working himself up into a passion*]. See, see, oh, see thy shame, Hieronimo!
See here a loving father to his son!
Behold the sorrows and the sad laments
That he delivereth for his son's decease!
If love's effects so strive in lesser things,
If love enforce such moods in meaner wits,
If love express such power in poor estates;
Hieronimo, as when a raging sea,
Tossed with the wind and tide, o'erturnest then
The upper billows, course of waves to keep,
Whilst lesser waters labour in the deep:
Then sham'st thou not, Hieronimo, to neglect
The sweet revenge of thy Horatio?
Though on this earth justice will not be found,
I'll down to hell, and in this passion
Knock at the dismal gates of Pluto's Court,
Getting by force, as once Alcides did,
A troop of furies and tormenting hags
To torture Don Lorenzo and the rest.
Then will I rend and tear them thus and thus [*tearing the papers*],
Shivering their limbs in pieces with my teeth.

FIRST CITIZEN. Oh, sir, my declaration!

SECOND CITIZEN. Save my bond!

[*Exit* HIERONIMO, *the* CITIZENS *after him. They re-enter immediately.*

THIRD CITIZEN. Alas, my lease! It cost me ten pound!
And you, my lord, have torn the same.

HIERONIMO. That cannot be: I gave it ne'er a wound:
Show me one drop of blood fall from the same.
Tush, no: run after, catch me if you can.

[*He runs off. All follow but the* OLD MAN, *who remains still. Re-enter* HIERONIMO *alone. He walks slowly up to the* OLD MAN, *and stares closely and fixedly at his face.*

HIERONIMO. And art thou come, Horatio, from the depth,
To ask for justice in this upper earth,

To tell thy father thou art unrevenged?
Go back, my son, complain to Æacus,
For here's no justice; gentle boy, be gone,
For justice is exilèd from the earth.
Hieronimo will bear thee company.

OLD MAN. Alas, my lord, whence springs this troubled speech?

HIERONIMO. But let me look on my Horatio.
Sweet boy, how art thou changed in death's black shade!
Had Proserpine no pity on thy youth,
But suffered thy fair crimson-coloured spring
With withered winter to be blasted thus?
Horatio, thou art older than thy father.

OLD MAN. Ay, my good lord, I am not your young son.
I am a grievèd man, and not a ghost,
That came for justice for my murdered son.

HIERONIMO. Ay, now I know thee, now thou nam'st thy son:
Thou art the lively image of my grief,
Within thy face my sorrows I may see.
Come in, old man, thou shalt to Isabel:
Lean on my arm: I thee, thou me, shalt stay,
And thou and I and she will sing a song,
Three parts in one, but all of discords framed—
Talk not of chords, but let us now be gone,
For with a cord Horatio was slain. [*Exeunt.*

TAMBURLAINE THE GREAT

CHRISTOPHER MARLOWE

(*c.* 1587)

There is no plot in this play; it is merely a succession of incidents by which Tamburlaine, the shepherd King, rose to control the whole Eastern world. In the following scene he has just helped Cosroe to dethrone his feeble-minded brother from the Kingdom of Persia, and is already plotting the overthrow of Cosroe himself, which he achieves with characteristic promptitude and thoroughness. Scenery is unimportant, but the costumes should be as ornate and barbarous as possible.

PART I, ACT II, SCENES V AND VII

SCENE: *Babylon. Enter* COSROE, TAMBURLAINE, THERIDAMAS, TECHELLES, *and* USUMCASANE (*officers of* TAMBURLAINE), *and officers and attendants of* COSROE.

TAMBURLAINE [*giving* COSROE *a crown*]. Hold thee, Cosroe; wear two imperial crowns;[1]
Think thee invested now as royally,
Even by the mighty hand of Tamburlaine,
As if as many kings as could encompass thee
With greatest pomp had crowned thee emperor.
COSROE. So do I, thrice-renownèd man-at-arms;
[*Handing back the crown to Tamburlaine*] And none shall keep the crown but Tamburlaine:
Thee do I make my regent in Persia,
And general-lieutenant of my armies.
And now, Lord Tamburlaine, my brother's camp
I leave to thee and to Theridamas,
To follow me to fair Persepolis.
Farewell, Lord Regent and his happy friends!
I long to sit upon my brother's throne.
OFFICER. Your Majesty shall shortly have your wish,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis.
[*Exeunt* COSROE *and* OFFICERS.
TAMBURLAINE. And ride in triumph through Persepolis!
Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles?
Usumcasane and Theridamas,
Is it not passing brave to be a king,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?
TECHELLES. Oh, my lord, it is sweet and full of pomp!
USUMCASANE. To be a king, is half to be a god.
THERIDAMAS. A god is not so glorious as a king:
I think the pleasure they enjoy in heaven
Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth;
To wear a crown enchased with pearl and gold,
Whose virtues carry with it life and death;
To ask and have, command and be obeyed;
When looks breed love, with looks to gain the prize,
Such power attractive shines in princes' eyes.
TAMBURLAINE. Why, say, Theridamas, wilt thou be a king?
THERIDAMAS. Nay, though I praise it I can live without it.
TAMBURLAINE. What say my other friends? Will you be kings?
TECHELLES. Ay, if I could, with all my heart, my lord.

[1] Cosroe had already been crowned once by the Persian nobles.

TAMBURLAINE. Why, that's well said, Techelles: so would I.
And so would you, my masters, would you not?
USUMCASANE. What then, my lord?
TAMBURLAINE. Why then, Casane, shall we wish for aught
The world affords in greatest novelty,
And rest attemptless, faint, and destitute?
Methinks we should not. I am strongly moved,
That if I should desire the Persian crown,
I could attain it with a wondrous ease:
And would not all our soldiers soon consent,
If we should aim at such a dignity?
THERIDAMAS. I know they would with our persuasions.
TAMBURLAINE. Why, then, Theridamas, I'll first assay
To get the Persian kingdom to myself;
Then thou for Parthia; they for Scythia and Media;
And if I prosper, all shall be as sure
As if the Turk, the Pope, Afric and Greece
Came creeping to us with their crowns apiece.
TECHELLES. Then shall we send to this triumphing king,
And bid him battle for his novel crown?
TAMBURLAINE. 'Twill prove a pretty jest, in faith, my friends.
THERIDAMAS. A jest to charge on twenty thousand men!
TAMBURLAINE. Now shalt thou see the Scythian Tamburlaine
Make but a jest to win the Persian crown.
Techelles, take a thousand horse with thee
And bid him turn him back to war with us,
That only made him king to make us sport:
We will not steal upon him cowardly,
But give him warning and more warriors.
Haste thee, Techelles: we will follow thee. [*Exit* TECHELLES.
What says Theridamas?
THERIDAMAS. Go on, for me.

[*Exeunt. Drums sound. Alarums of battle within. Enter* TAMBURLAINE *and his three* OFFICERS, *with* COSROE *wounded and a prisoner.*

COSROE. Barbarous and bloody Tamburlaine,
Thus to deprive me of my crown and life!
An uncouth pain torments my grievèd soul
And death arrests the organ of my voice—
Bloody and insatiate Tamburlaine!

TAMBURLAINE. Nature, that framed us of four elements
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspiring minds:
Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wand'ring planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Will us to wear ourselves, and never rest,
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

TECHELLES. And that made us, the friends of Tamburlaine,
To lift our swords against the Persian king.

COSROE. The strangest men that ever Nature made!
I know not how to take their tyrannies.
My bloodless body waxeth chill and cold,
And with my blood my life slides through my wound.
My soul begins to take her flight to hell,
And summons all my senses to depart:
The heat and moisture, which did feed each other,
For want of nourishment to feed them both,
Are dry and cold; and now doth ghastly Death
With greedy talons gripe my bleeding heart.
Theridamas and Tamburlaine, I die:
And fearful vengeance light upon you both!

[*He dies.* TAMBURLAINE *takes his crown and puts it on his own head.*

TAMBURLAINE. Theridamas, Techelles, and the rest,
Who think you now is King of Persia?

ALL. Tamburlaine! Tamburlaine!

TAMBURLAINE. So; now it is more surer on my head
Than if the gods had held a parliament,
And all pronounced me King of Persia. [*Exeunt.*

EDWARD II

(*c.* 1592)

This is, as a whole, Marlowe's best play. The plot is very well handled, and the language is without the rant and extravagance (though also, it must be admitted, without the 'Marlowesque' splendour that accompanied those faults) of the earlier plays. It is, too, a more human play: if Marlowe had died before writing *Edward II*, one would have been tempted to say that he could portray only abnormal characters. A comparison of the scene that follows with the extract from *Tamburlaine* (the incidents represented have a certain similarity) should, if they are carefully acted, bring out these differences.

King Edward II has been defeated by the barons, and Mortimer, their leader, has sent the Bishop of Winchester to ask him to resign the crown.

No scenery is needed. The clothes should show the offices of the characters.

Act V, Scene i

KING EDWARD, *with* LEICESTER *in attendance. He is in conversation with the* BISHOP, *with whom is a gentleman named* TRUSSEL.

EDWARD. Ah, Leicester, weigh how hardly I can brook
To lose my crown and kingdom without cause;
To give ambitious Mortimer my right,
That, like a mountain, overwhelms my bliss!
But that the heavens appoint I must obey.
Here, take my crown; the life of Edward too.
[*He takes off his crown and holds it in his hands.*
Two kings in England cannot reign at once.
But stay awhile; let me be king till night,
That I may gaze upon this glittering crown.
So shall my eyes receive their last content.
[*He walks to the window, and looks out.*
Continue ever, thou celestial sun;
Let never silent night possess this clime;
Stand still, you watches of the element:
All times and seasons, rest you at a stay,
That Edward may be still fair England's king!
But day's bright beams doth vanish fast away,
[*He turns from the window.*
And needs I must resign my wishèd crown.
[*He pauses, and glares at them.*

Inhuman creatures, nursed with tiger's milk,
Why gape you for your sovereign's overthrow?
See, monsters, see, I'll wear my crown again.
[*He puts it on: the* BISHOP *and* TRUSSEL *smile and whisper.*
What, fear you not the fury of your king?
But, hapless Edward, thou art fondly led;
They pass[1] not for thy frowns as late they did,
But seek to make a new-elected king;
Which fills my mind with strange despairing thoughts,
And in this torment comfort find I none,
But that I feel the crown upon my head;
And therefore let me wear it yet awhile.
TRUSSEL. My lord, the Parliament must have present news;
And therefore say, will you resign or no? ["*The King rageth.*"
EDWARD. I'll not resign, but whilst I live be king.
Traitors, begone, and join with Mortimer!
Elect, conspire, install, do what you will:
Their blood, and yours, shall seal these treacheries.
BISHOP. This answer we'll return; and so, farewell.
[*He and* TRUSSEL *bow, and move in conversation toward the door.*
LEICESTER. Call them again, my lord, and speak them fair;
For, if they go, the Prince[2] shall lose his right.
EDWARD [*almost weeping*]. Call thou them back: I have no power to speak.
LEICESTER [*calling after the* BISHOP]. My lord, the King is willing to resign.
BISHOP. If he be not, let him choose.
EDWARD. Oh, would I might! But heavens and earth conspire
To make me miserable. Here, receive my crown.
Receive it! No: these innocent hands of mine
Shall not be guilty of so foul a crime:
He of you all that most desires my blood,
And will be called the murderer of a king,
Take it. [*They look uncomfortable and hesitate.*] What, are you moved? Pity you me?
Then send for unrelenting Mortimer,
And Isabel,[3] whose eyes being turned to steel

[1] care. [2] The young Prince of Wales.
[3] The Queen, who was conspiring with Mortimer.

Will sooner sparkle fire than shed a tear.
Yet stay; for rather than I'll look on them,
Here, here! [*Gives them the crown.*] Now, sweet God of heaven,
Make me despise this transitory pomp,
And sit for aye enthronisèd in heaven!
Come, Death, and with thy fingers close my eyes,
Or if I live, let me forget myself!

BISHOP. My lord——

EDWARD. Call me not lord. Away! Out of my sight!
Ah, pardon me! Grief makes me lunatic.
Commend me to my son, and bid him rule
Better than I: yet how have I transgressed,
Unless it be with too much clemency?

TRUSSEL. And thus most humbly do we take our leave.

EDWARD. Farewell. [*Exeunt* BISHOP *and* TRUSSEL *with the crown.*
I know the next news that they bring
Will be my death; and welcome it shall be:
To wretched men death is felicity. [*He goes out with* LEICESTER.

The following plays are recommended for study:

NICHOLAS UDALL, *Ralph Roister-Doister* (1541–53).
BISHOP STILL (?), *Gammer Gurton's Needle* (*c.* 1550).
PEELE, *The Arraignment of Paris* (*c.* 1580).
LYLY, *Campaspe* (1584); *Endimion* (1588); *Gallathea* (*c.* 1588).
GREENE, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1589); *Orlando Furioso* (*c.* 1590).
SACKVILLE and NORTON, *Gorboduc* (1562).
KYD, *The Spanish Tragedy* (*c.* 1589).
MARLOWE, *Tamburlaine the Great* (*c.* 1587); *The Jew of Malta* (1588); *Doctor Faustus* (1589); *Edward II* (*c.* 1592).

CHAPTER III

SHAKESPEARE

I. Shakespeare's Career. Some time about 1584 William Shakespeare, at the age of twenty, left his newly acquired family at Stratford-on-Avon, walked to London, and attached himself to Lord Leicester's players at "The Theater." He seems never to have acted in any but minor parts, but he soon showed a talent for adapting and improving the plays of others, and about 1590 he produced a play of his own, called *Love's Labour's Lost*. Two years later he was already well known and was making a comfortable income. From this date onward he wrote plays steadily till 1610 or 1611, when he returned to Stratford, where he died in 1616.

II. The Shakespearean Quality. None of his plays (after the first) was entirely original in plot, but all were very much more than adaptations. In method, and in scope, his early plays differed little from those of his predecessors and contemporaries; *Love's Labour's Lost* was a close imitation of Lyly, and *Richard III* is in the style of Marlowe. But in these, and even in the passages that he rewrote or interpolated in earlier plays such as *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry VI*, there is the unmistakable stamp of genius. John Hales, a contemporary of Shakespeare, said that whatever any poet said well he would produce it better said by Shakespeare; that is an exaggeration, but it contains the germ of the truth. We have only to compare Sir Tophas in *Endimion* with Armado in *Love's Labour's Lost*, Marlowe's *Edward II* and Shakespeare's *Richard II*,

or Hieronimo's mad scenes in *The Spanish Tragedy* with *King Lear*, and we shall recognize at once not only the difference made by time and experience (which in the first instance is negligible), but the quality of genius, the insight and the power which single out Shakespeare as the one "great enchanter" among a generation of able, some brilliant, poets and dramatists. Dryden, who was a very sure and careful critic, and who stood at sufficient distance from Shakespeare to see him in accurate perspective, said that "He was the man who of all modern and perhaps ancient poets had the largest and most comprehensive soul." That is probably, as much as any one quality can be, the secret of his greatness; the breadth of his vision and the immensity of his human sympathy are unequalled by any poet. His range of thought is almost unlimited, and his power of expressing that thought is equally so. His vocabulary was by far the richest yet used in English literature, his verse the most magnificent known to poetry, his prose hardly inferior to it, and his lyrics to this day among the most exquisite in the language. In the construction of a play, in handling a plot, and in sense of the stage he proved himself a past master, though it was not until his later plays that he became so. He was the only dramatist of his generation who combined with this practical and technical dramatic ability the highest poetic qualities and a clear vision of the essential elements of comedy and tragedy. A hundred years ago Shakespeare's work suffered from indiscriminate praise and glorification; nothing that he had written could be wrong. Recently the pendulum has swung across, and attempts have been made to discredit his genius and write him down as only one of a host of talented playwrights. Now at last we seem to be acquiring some sense of proportion; we know that Shakespeare's work is far from perfect, but we can arrive more clearly at a fairly accurate estimate of the qualities which differentiate it

from that of his contemporaries and enabled him, in the space of twenty years, to seize the infinite possibilities of the crude, imperfect, and still relatively formless drama as he found it and to create from it a fine artistic medium for both comedy and tragedy. The purpose of this chapter is not to give a comprehensive account of Shakespeare's work, but as far as possible to demonstrate the means by which this result was obtained.

III. Chronology of the Plays. We know now, with some degree of certainty, the order in which Shakespeare's plays were written, and this knowledge is essential to a proper appreciation of the development of the drama in his hands. He began by assisting Marlowe and others in the composition and adaptation of *Henry VI* and other plays, and between 1589 and 1595 he wrote his four early comedies (*Love's Labour's Lost*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*), one romantic tragedy (*Romeo and Juliet*), and three historical tragedies (*Richard III*, *Richard II*, and *King John*). The four comedies, taken in order, show very clearly the growth of individuality out of convention and the strengthening of his technique—they all owe much to Lyly; the histories, too, modelled at first directly on Marlowe, gain rapidly in proportion, humanity, humour, and restraint—the qualities that Marlowe chiefly lacked. *Romeo and Juliet* is most remarkable for its poetry and flashes of brilliant characterization; it was not until some years later that Shakespeare was temperamentally capable of writing tragedy—and had he been so earlier the wonderful freshness of his comedies must have suffered. The next play was another comedy—*The Merchant of Venice*—and he then (1596–1600) tried the experiment of combining comedy with history, in *Henry IV* (Parts I and II) and *Henry V*. During these years he also wrote two farces (*The Taming of the Shrew* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*). He had now

(1600) experimented with almost all known forms of drama, and had reached the climax of his comic period in the three great romantic comedies, the form of which he practically invented (*Much Ado about Nothing*, *As You Like It*, and *Twelfth Night*). *Julius Cæsar* was the next play; it is probable that the publication of the second edition of North's translation of *Plutarch's Lives* drew his attention to the possibilities of Roman history for tragedy. This was followed by *Hamlet* (*c.* 1603), and for the next few years he probably wrote one great tragedy each year—*Othello*, *King Lear*, *Macbeth*, and *Antony and Cleopatra*. During this time he also wrote three so-called comedies (*All's Well that Ends Well*, *Measure for Measure*, and *Troilus and Cressida*), but they are bitter and ironical, and quite different from the comedies of the previous century. His earlier work is full of light-hearted fun and high spirits, but at the turn of the century there was a sudden change to bitterness and scorn; we do not know what caused it, but in the plays of the last period we see his gradual return, through terrible suffering, to comparative peace of mind and happiness. Toward the end of his career he grew careless; about the year 1608 he wrote *Coriolanus*, *Timon of Athens*, and *Pericles*, all inferior plays. After that he wrote only three more complete plays (*Cymbeline*, *The Winter's Tale*, and *The Tempest*), all romances, the last of which was probably his farewell to the stage. In 1612 or 1613 he assisted with the composition of *Henry VIII*.

IV. Comedy. Shakespeare's early comedies were, in the main, experiments with the devices that were already familiar in comedy; on these experiments, in characterization, dialogue, and plot, he based his later masterpieces. The most obvious weaknesses are type-characterization, complexity of plot, forced endings, doggerel verse, elaborate prose, and an over-fondness for 'conceits' and punning. All these faults he overcame in greater or less degree in his later plays;

what we do notice at once in both the comedies and the historical plays is an increased reality and sympathy in the characters, a feeling that they are, however typical and traditional, already drawn from life and personal experience. We meet many old friends—the braggart, the priest, the country bumpkin, the Court fool, courtiers, and fairies—but they are all different, all far more alive and human. The Vice of the interlude has developed into Falstaff (Gluttony) and Sir Toby Belch (Drunkenness). The history-play is never a mere chronicle—whether it is a tragedy based on terror, as *Richard III*, or on pity, as *Richard II*, or on both, as *King John*, or whether it is a comedy, as are the later histories, the history is used as no more than a framework for a drama, and that drama is evolved from the interaction of the characters, not merely from incidents. The three great comedies are something new in drama, because, besides improving on the romantic story (of which Lyly's comedies were entirely composed, except for one or two traditional comic figures), Shakespeare interwove a comic sub-plot of his own, with original characters and incidents, which always ended in being the chief delight of the play. It is in the Falstaff plays that we come for the first time to humour which is as telling to-day as it was when it was written, and which was surpassed only in the exquisite fooling of *Twelfth Night*. The new and the eternal quality of this humour springs from the fact that it is always on character rather than on incident that the genius of Shakespeare is lavished. We remember his characters for what they are rather than for what they do or say; however amusing the dialogue, however absurd the incidents, they lose most of their point if separated from their context—and this makes it difficult to quote from the plays. Fashions, manners, wit, taste, language—these have all changed since the time when Shakespeare wrote, but human nature has changed scarcely at all. And it is because Shakespeare's

plays are brimful of human nature that he, almost alone among his contemporaries, is "not of an age, but for all time."

V. Tragedy. *Romeo and Juliet*, Shakespeare's first tragedy, was an innovation in that it aimed solely at pity, not horror, for its effect. The same is true of *Richard II.* The melodramatic hero-villain of Marlowe now appears in history as the terrible, but quite human, Richard III, and in comedy as Shylock, who evokes more pity than hatred. This idea was the foundation of Shakespeare's later tragedy, even when, as in *Macbeth* and *King Lear*, it is reinforced with horror quite as gruesome as the extravagances of Kyd and Marlowe.[1] The conventional distinction between tragedy and comedy in Shakespeare's time was the ending —the same story could be classified as tragic or comic by altering the ending. But Shakespeare's idea of tragedy and comedy went much deeper than this, and to tragedy he brought two new qualities, the value of which cannot be over-estimated. Shakespeare, apparently unconsciously, closely followed the rules of tragedy laid down by Aristotle. Almost every one of his tragedies centres round a single figure, and the tale is always of suffering and exceptional calamity, leading to death. Usually the central figure is a man of high degree. The calamity in Shakespearean tragedy is always obsession—obsession which is fatal, but implies greatness. The heroes need not be virtuous, but they must have some element of greatness—they must inspire terror and admiration as well as pity. This is really a further development of Marlowe's tragic idea of the illimitable capacity of human ambition until it comes to be faced by death: Shakespeare works out the same idea in persons with widely varying ambitions, and shows that ambition and desire lead always to disaster if they are allowed

[1] The welding of the melodramatic use of violent and vivid action with intense mental conflict is one of the most remarkable characteristics of Shakespearean tragedy.

to overrule sanity, and that it is in this fact, and not in death (which is only the logical end of all calamity—sometimes, indeed, a blessed relief from it), that the essence of the tragic idea lies. Obsession, leading to treachery and so to the ruin of a great man—that is the theme of Shakespeare's tragedy. His other important contribution to the tragic tradition was this. Like the best Greek tragedy, Shakespeare's art does not appeal primarily to the eyes and ears, but to the heart. He did not look upon tragedy as a series of terrifying incidents, but as the failure of a man through being placed in circumstances which he is not strong enough to overcome. Shakespeare's great characters are neither spotless heroes nor unmitigated villains; they are live men and women, like ourselves. It is in this fact, that they *are* like ourselves, that the secret of Shakespeare's appeal lies. He first arouses our sympathy and affection for the hero, and then makes us share in the tragedy by showing us his downfall. This appeal to the sympathies of the audience was an idea only very dimly realized by Shakespeare's predecessors, and unfortunately it was one of which his successors made but little use.

The plays written toward the end of his career contain passages of lovely poetry and some fine characterization, and they are also interesting because they show experiments in plot (such as attempts to cover long periods of time), in elaborations such as masks and dances, and in verse. But they are not very important, because the innovations (except in verse) had little effect upon succeeding dramatists. Also they are not carefully written, and none of them is, as a dramatic whole, comparable with the plays that preceded them.

VI. Technique. If we take Shakespeare's plays in their chronological order we shall see the gradual development of his verse from the halting blank verse of the Elizabethans, with its detached lines and frequent rimes, and with the sense accent in strict accord with the regular

five-beat line, into the freer and exquisitely lyrical verse of the later comedies, and then into the sublime and sonorous measure of the tragedies, where the rhythms of sense and of metre interplay like two melodies in a fugue. In the last plays this freedom grew into carelessness, which resulted in frequent passages where the verse rhythm almost disappears—a fault which is still more obvious in some of Shakespeare's immediate successors.

We must remember that Shakespeare, like all his contemporaries, wrote for the theatre and not for the library. He was an actor himself, and he had a marvellous sense of the stage. It is true that this dramatic technique took longer to form than his poetic technique (it is important to keep the two distinct); his early plays are all faulty in construction, and few even of the tragedies are perfectly proportioned. But dramatic technique was more difficult to learn; to the Elizabethans poetry came naturally, and the effective construction of drama did not, as we have seen from Shakespeare's predecessors. But it is difficult to imagine what would have been the destiny of English drama if the genius of Shakespeare had not lifted it, at this most momentous crisis in its development, to heights undreamed of by those who made the way ready for him.

VII. The Theatre. In Shakespeare's time there were three different types of stage—the Court stage at Whitehall and other palaces, the private (aristocratic) theatres, and the public playhouses. The Court and other aristocratic audiences were cultured, but at the public theatres most of the audience were illiterate. Many of the plays were written with an eye to all sections of the community, but the tragedies were mainly popular in appeal, and the comedies were intended principally for more cultured tastes. At the public theatre costumes were limited, though ambitious; there was no painted scenery, but increasing use was made of 'properties,' and quite elaborate erections,

such as ships and battlements, were used toward the end of Shakespeare's time. The stage was almost surrounded by audience, and there was no curtain, the piece being played through by daylight (the theatre was open to the sky) without a break. At Court, however, and to a less degree in the private theatres, large sums and immense trouble were spent on costume, properties, scenery, and lighting. A stage was erected at one end of a large hall, such as that at the Inns of Court, and painted back-cloths were erected one beside the other at the back of it; no curtain was used, and the actors moved in front of the appropriate scene as the action required. The acting was done by the various licensed companies (Shakespeare's company became "The King's Players" in 1603) and by the choir-schools, whose reputation increased steadily and rivalled that of the professional actors. But the theatre was growing into increasing disfavour with the public authorities, and throughout Shakespeare's time the drama really existed on royal and private patronage.

The scenes from Shakespeare's plays are not printed in full, as texts of these plays are readily available. The following are recommended as affording a fairly representative selection:

King Henry IV, Part I (1596–97)	Act III, Scene I
Twelfth Night (1598–1601)	Act I, Scene v, and Act II, Scene III
Macbeth (1606–10)	Act II, Scenes I and II
Antony and Cleopatra (1604–8)	Act IV, Scenes XII and XIII (the last two)

The following plays should also be studied in full:

Comedies	*Tragedies*
Love's Labour's Lost (1589–92)	*Richard III* (1593–94)
Henry IV, Parts I and II (1596–98)	*Richard II* (1593–94)
Much Ado about Nothing (1598–99)	*Julius Cæsar* (1599–1600)
As You Like It (1598–99)	*Hamlet* (1602–4)
Twelfth Night (1598–1601)	*Othello* (1602–9)
The Tempest (1610–11)	*King Lear* (1605–6)
	Macbeth (1606–10)
	Antony and Cleopatra (1604–8)

CHAPTER IV

SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPORARIES AND SUCCESSORS

THE following table, in which the dates denote the *period of dramatic activity* of each writer, shows the relation of the chief Elizabethan and Jacobean dramatists in point of time.

Shakespeare's Predecessors [1]	*Shakespeare's Contemporaries*	*Shakespeare's Successors*
Greene, 1590–92	(Shakespeare, 1589–1611)	Beaumont, 1608–13
Kyd, 1588–94	Jonson, 1597–1633	Fletcher, 1608–25
Marlowe, 1587–94	Chapman, 1599–1631	Webster, 1602–39
	Marston, 1599–1613	Heywood, 1608–39
	Middleton, 1596–1624	Massinger, 1619–31
	Dekker,[2] 1600–30	Ford, 1621–38
	Tourneur,[2] 1607–13	Shirley, 1625–42

I. SHAKESPEARE'S CONTEMPORARIES. After the death of Queen Elizabeth the drama became less and less a national institution and more directly under Court patronage. It is this that accounts for the comparatively sudden change in subject and taste; the moral standards of those classes that supported the drama became more and more debased, and this is reflected in the drama itself. Ben Jonson, however, and most of the earlier writers of the century still wrote for the public stage, and though we are accustomed to speak and read of the degeneration that set in after Queen Elizabeth's death, this degeneration is not really apparent until the period after Shakespeare's death, the last twenty-six years before the closing of the theatres in 1642. The

[1] See Chapter II.

[2] These dramatists, though their work was mainly contemporary with that of Shakespeare, in temper and method belong more to his successors.

dramatist writes for his public,[1] and unless he is an idealist without worldly ambition he is more likely to give it what it wants than what it needs. If he is a mixture of practical man and idealist, like Shakespeare, he will give it both: if, also like Shakespeare, he is a supreme genius he will mould the two into a noble form of art. But none of Shakespeare's contemporaries or followers can rightly be called men of supreme genius. We are too apt to think of Shakespeare's work as representing all that was best and most typical in the Elizabethan drama—as an embodiment of the enlightened taste of the time. But this is almost certainly a mistake. It is true that his idea of both comedy and tragedy, his wonderfully sympathetic portrayal of character, his language, his verse, his poetic imagination, all soar high above the work of his fellows, and it is also true that they are the logical outcome of what went before. But it is highly improbable that this was recognized by his audiences; we know that the plays of Jonson and of Beaumont and Fletcher were more popular than Shakespeare's, and it seems likely that the very qualities that we admire most in Shakespeare were those that his audiences appreciated least. Marlowe and Shakespeare were both men of genius and men with profound artistic ideals. If we take away what was peculiar to their work we shall get a clearer idea of contemporary dramatic values, and we shall also realize how much we owe to their genius.

Ben Jonson sought to reimpose on English drama the classical restrictions which Shakespeare largely ignored, and a comparison of their work, particularly in tragedy, shows how foreign these restrictions are to English drama—all the more so in that Jonson's tragedy (of which *Sejanus* is

[1] Plays were still written at this time for immediate performance and not for publication. Shirley was the first dramatist who wrote, occasionally, solely for the press. Thomas Heywood published his plays under protest, to protect himself against inaccurate pirated editions.

the best example) is as fine and effective, one feels, as is possible within the limits that he set for himself. Jonson differed from Shakespeare in both subject and method; he was far more learned, and to him the observance of classical rules (such as the preservation of the unities) was of more moment than other more important dramatic qualities, such as charm, humour, pathos, and imagination—in all of which Shakespeare excelled. Jonson is singularly lacking in charm. He was a realist, and preferred prose to poetry, though he handled both with great skill; his prose is particularly excellent; none of his contemporaries, except Shakespeare, wrote dramatic dialogue of such strength and purity. He handled plots well, and was fertile in invention. He was a man full of contradictions, and so are his plays, which contain exquisite and delicate lyrics, although the wit and the comic incidents are some of the most brutal in a brutal age—he was particularly addicted to the popular sport of "hitting a man when he is down."

In comedy Jonson used his great powers of characterization in a kind of drama which he called the "comedy of humours," for which he remains chiefly famous to this day. The outstanding quality of Shakespeare's characterization is that he gives us the whole man; our laughter is the laughter of understanding and sympathy, and we know his characters better than we know many of our acquaintances in real life. Jonson does not attempt this; his chief concerns are 'humours'—that is, idiosyncrasies, the whims and affectations of his day. The fun is almost impersonal, the judgment of common sense on extravagance and absurdity; our laughter is always detached, hostile, sometimes even cruel—it springs from the brain, not from the heart. *Every Man in his Humour*, Jonson's most typical play of this kind, was produced in 1598, probably a year or two before Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*. Shakespeare is known to have acted in it. It is admirable entertainment, but we have only

to compare Captain Bobadill with Sir Andrew Aguecheek to realize the gulf between them. Type-characterization, such as Jonson's, is a form of caricature, and it possesses the limitations as well as the peculiar opportunities of that art. For the purpose of topical stage satire, especially in the hands of a satirist so brilliant as Jonson, it is extremely effective; but all the best drama emphasizes that the comic or tragic in human beings is caused by many contradictory impulses and ideas. Type-characterization was nothing new; it was the method of the early dramatists, from which Shakespeare and his predecessors had been gradually freeing themselves. But Jonson, by emphasizing it and handling it so cleverly himself, caused a set-back to really human characterization which profoundly affected the comedy not only of his own, but also of succeeding ages. On the other hand, however, the realism and vigour of his satire did much to counteract the growing artificiality and decadence.

Jonson virtually invented and perfected the Court mask in its Jacobean form, and he wrote forty of them. The nature of a mask depended very much upon the occasion for which it was required; they were based on moral allegory, or classical myth, or English folk-lore, and usually contained an anti-mask consisting in comedy and burlesque. They were always splendid performances, richly produced, making full use of music, dancing, and spectacle. In the settings designed for these masks by such men as Inigo Jones we find the first approach toward modern scenic display. Jonson's masks are the best of the period, but nearly all the dramatists wrote masks, and many of them were of high quality. The mask, though it had considerable effect on Court theatricals, and was often introduced in miniature into a play, is not in the direct line of growth of English drama, and will not be further considered here.

During most of his life Jonson exercised a kind of

dictatorship in the world of letters, and most of his contemporaries were influenced by him, especially George Chapman and John Marston. The excellence of Chapman's verse and poetic effects has unduly enhanced his reputation as a dramatist. He had little sense of character, could not construct a play, and wrote dialogue that, though learned, is often obscure. There are seven comedies and seven tragedies in his name; the latter are in the direct line of the 'tragedy of blood' that was popularized by Kyd, handled later with masterly skill by Webster, and is still alive in the melodrama of to-day. Marston essayed the same kinds of play; though less a poet, he was a much more able dramatist, and his characters are unforgettable. He was really successful only in comedy, though his tragedies contain fine passages. *Eastward Ho*, written in collaboration by Chapman, Marston, and Jonson, though an indifferent play, contains amusing passages, and is an interesting record of city life. Much of the dialogue in plays of this time is spoilt by personal satire and abuse; there was considerable ill-feeling among the dramatists, and they attacked each other in their plays. Chapman and Marston were sent to prison for their libellous remarks in *Eastward Ho*, and Jonson voluntarily accompanied them.

Thomas Middleton's plays were best when he collaborated with John Rowley, but he was the first of the really decadent dramatists, and he chose coarse subjects. Ben Jonson called him a "base fellow." But he had varied ability and a keen sense of the theatre; few of his plays are satisfactory all through, though all contain fine scenes. The lyrical quality, a feature in most plays of this period, is lacking in his work. The plays of Dekker and Tourneur will be considered with those of the next group.

II. Shakespeare's Successors. The marked decadence in the drama after the death of Shakespeare was largely due to the taste of its patrons, but partly to natural exhaustion

—the logical evolution of an art that has worn thin, and become too popular and too easy in an age of second-rate artists and degenerate audiences. Men no longer tried to produce a work of art which was beautiful as a whole, but were content with brilliant passages and episodes. Comedy began to lose its kindliness and humanity in excessive and exaggerated satire and debasing incidents and dialogue. Tragedy aimed no longer at ennobling, only at terror and repulsion; the splendid tragic vision of the destiny of man that grew out of the miracle plays into the moralities, became steadily clearer in the work of Kyd and Marlowe, and culminated in the tragedies of Shakespeare was now lost in sensation and melodrama. Elizabethan drama had everything in its favour: its foundations were laid on a great dramatic idea, with its roots in the very heart of national life; in Queen Elizabeth it had an enthusiastic patron with noble tastes and ideals; the new learning brought it the form that it lacked and the ardour that rarefied it; and the men who moulded it were men of genius. All these things the next generation lacked. We have already seen the effect of the times in Shakespeare's last plays. The great dramatic idea was lost; taste became degenerate, and dramatists were content to pander to the demand for artificiality and novelty; and the growing want of moral earnestness and the increased complexity of life resulted in a shifting of the emphasis from the drama itself, as revealed in the language and action of the characters, to single episodes, detached scenes, pageants, dances, and other forms of entertainment that made little demand upon the intellect. We shall find in the tragedies of this period strong scenes and flashes of fine poetry, but blood and horror and unnatural disaster such as appeal to the lowest rather than to the noblest in human imagination: and in the comedies dialogue that is often clever and delicately phrased, but generally tedious and lacking in refinement, considerable display and 'business,'

and a few dramatic episodes, but comparative neglect of character and of the principle of artistic unity. The Puritan hostility to acting during the early years of the seventeenth century may seem unreasonable and blind; but when the theatres were closed in 1642 there was ample ground on which all that was finest in the Puritan temper could base its disapproval and opposition.

The work of Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher (who wrote chiefly in collaboration, and together produced forty-two plays) is nearest to that of Shakespeare. Their range of subject was as wide as his, and, like his, their work alone among their contemporaries has the fascinating charm of romantic imagination. They wrote comedies, tragedies, and histories, and even farce, but most of their plays are really 'tragi-comedy,' a hybrid form of drama which has become specially characteristic of the English stage, in which serious matters are dealt with, but a tragic issue is avoided, often at the cost of a sudden artificial revulsion of feeling which completely ruins the effect of the play.[1] Their plays show a decline from the moral and poetic and artistic heights of Shakespeare, and they show a less acute sense of the stage, but they still belong to the same great age before drama fell into decay, and are immeasurably superior to those of their other contemporaries; there is little in the drama of this period, outside Shakespeare, to compare with *Philaster* and *The Maid's Tragedy*, and nearly all their plays are of high quality. Dryden's well-known criticism of them is worth quoting: "Their plots were generally more regular than Shakespeare's. . . . 'Humour' they made it not their business to describe; they represented all the passions very lively, but above all Love. I am apt to believe the English language in them arrived to its highest perfection; Shakespeare's language is a little obsolete, and Ben Jonson's

[1] *E.g.*, Beaumont and Fletcher's *A King and No King* and most of Middleton's plays.

wit comes short of theirs." He also said that their plays were, in 1667, "the most pleasant and frequent entertainments of the stage" and twice as popular as Shakespeare's or Jonson's. It is only in choice of subject that they show any signs of the approaching decadence.

All the dramatists of this period wrote some tragedy, but the principal writers of romantic tragedy were John Webster, Cyril Tourneur, and John Ford. Tourneur had flashes of poetry, and achieved sensational scenes, but he showed no real power of handling a plot or creating a character. The tragedies of Webster are far more remarkable; they are full of power, and in spite of extravagance and horror they have the Shakespearean quality of dignity and sublime imagination. The characters live vividly and are the basis of the tragedy. Although the verse is sometimes rough the plays contain magnificent poetry—no dramatist as yet, other than Marlowe and Shakespeare, is so rich in "golden phrases." He has little pathos or humanity; we remember his plays for their terrible gloom and despair, and the startling flashes that are thrown into the souls of people. Ford, who wrote later than Webster, was more decadent, and his plays are less firmly constructed and more melodramatic. But his verse and poetic effects are of a high order; and the beauty of his language and his intense thought and imagination place him in the front rank of the poets of his time. The success of *Hamlet* (which play itself followed the lines of earlier tragedies such as *The Spanish Tragedy*) seems to have popularized the subject of revenge, upon which theme most of the tragedies and tragicomedies of this period are based. The tragedies are famous chiefly for their employment of horror and torment, but it should be noted that such scenes, though frequent and evidently popular, have little to do with the actual development of the plot.

In the plays of Thomas Dekker and Thomas Heywood

we see true realism, undistorted by the 'humorous' theories of Jonson. Their comedies are domestic plays —a picture of ordinary people living an ordinary life in a real time. Dekker is the antithesis of Jonson in almost every way. Jonson was learned, classic, and a theorist, heavy and dignified; Dekker was romantic and spontaneous, a man of the streets with no theories. There is something peculiarly lovable about his plays—probably because of his unfailing good humour. He wrote much in collaboration. Heywood (whom Lamb not unfairly described as " a prose Shakespeare ") wrote plays of many kinds, but his domestic plays are the most remarkable. Unlike Dekker, he wrote of country life rather than the town. He was a fellow-actor and dramatist with Shakespeare, and wrote twenty-four plays, with almost no collaboration, besides a quantity of other literary work.

By the time that Philip Massinger and James Shirley began to write the drama had become thoroughly decadent. Every noteworthy tendency had run its course and become stale, and contemporary taste and manners had grown debased. All that they could do was to work over old ground, and their characters became more and more typical and stereotyped, and their plots more and more immodest and sensational. Within these limits, and under these conditions, the plays are interesting and clever. Shirley's diction is graceful, and though his plots are all much the same, his comedies are polite and amusing, and his tragedies (particularly *The Traitor*) appeal to pity rather than terror. He lived to see his plays revived after the Restoration. Massinger understood the theatre well; he wrote interesting, well-constructed plays and occasional strong scenes. But his language was unpoetical and his verse inadequate, and he lacked strength and feeling in both comedy and tragedy. His morals were the morals of his age, untouched by any poetic vision. He has been well described as " the

late twilight of the long and splendid day of which Marlowe was the dawn."

In spite of the general decadence of the age there is an element of greatness in all the more famous of its dramatists; many were true poets, several were accomplished playwrights, all were men of remarkable mental powers. It will be found, too, that the most important and far-reaching developments in the drama, not only in England, but throughout Europe, have had their root in the inspiration of the dramatists of Elizabethan and Jacobean times. It is no longer possible in this book to attempt to give a comprehensive survey of the work of every dramatist; their numbers have by this time become very great. The writers that have been mentioned alone produced some hundreds of plays, and there were many others. The extracts that follow are chosen to illustrate as far as possible the lines of development of different kinds of drama at this time, and not necessarily to give examples of the best plays.

III. The Stage. The actual stage and structure of the theatre changed little between 1590 and 1642. It remained a platform stage, almost surrounded by the audience: it was not until after the Restoration that it was replaced by the modern 'picture' stage. Scenery was not yet used, except in private theatres, but the stage was enlarged, and tableaux, horses and other animals, and processions of considerable size were introduced, as may be seen from Fletcher's stage-directions to *Henry VIII*. It was during the performance of this play in 1613 that the Globe theatre was burnt down (and Shakespeare's manuscripts perished with it); the thatched roof was set on fire by wadding from the guns which were used to fire salutes in the wings. In all Shakespeare's later plays we notice an increasing use of masks, dances, and spectacular displays, generally quite unconnected with the plot, though sometimes, as in *Pericles*, used to unravel an unwieldy story. (It is noticeable that

these scenes are always badly written, even in earlier plays—*e.g.*, the Hymen scene in *As You Like It* and the Hecate speeches in *Macbeth*; it is questionable whether Shakespeare wrote them himself—if so, he clearly did so against his will and without care.) In many plays Shakespeare introduced 'business' which would appeal to the probably large part of his audience that cared little for drama—such as the wrestling scene in *As You Like It* and the bear (which was perhaps borrowed from a neighbouring bear-pit) in *The Winter's Tale*. Similar diversions occur in many plays of this period, and it is easy to see how, in the hands of lesser dramatists, they, instead of the play itself, became the main channel of appeal.[1] The plays were still performed by licensed companies, and by the Children of the Chapel Royal and other schools. No women acted. In 1629 a French company with female actors in it appeared in London, but they were hissed off the stage. The popularity of masks (invariably private ventures), which were always spectacular, probably had a good deal to do with the increasing elaboration and complication of theatrical drama.

EVERY MAN IN HIS HUMOUR

Ben Jonson

(1598)

The scene is a room in the Windmill Tavern in the Old Jewry. Master Wellbred, a young man of fashion, is drinking and taking tobacco with Captain Bobadill, a braggart, and Master Mathew, a 'town gull'—a would-be fashionable young man. Edward Knowell, the son of a country gentleman, is a friend of Wellbred, who has invited him to town. Knowell has brought with him Stephen, a 'country gull,' who is even a greater fool than Mathew, but still more anxious to be in the fashion. The fashion among

[1] Such devices were ridiculed by Beaumont and Fletcher in their *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, a satire on contemporary drama and poetry from which much may be learnt about acting conditions.

young men of the town was to affect melancholy[1] and literary tastes. The 'humours' of the characters should be heavily emphasized in acting. Chairs, tables, mugs, etc. Elizabethan costumes.

Act III, Scenes i, ii, and v

MATHEW. Yes, faith, sir, we were at your lodging to seek you too.

WELLBRED. Oh, I came not there to-night.

BOBADILL. Your brother delivered us as much.

WELLBRED. Who, my brother Downright?

BOBADILL. He. Mr Wellbred, I know not in what kind you hold me; but let me say to you this: as sure as honour, I esteem it so much out of the sunshine of reputation, to throw the least beam of regard upon such a——

WELLBRED. Sir, I must hear no ill words of my brother.

BOBADILL. I protest to you, as I have a thing to be saved about me, I never saw any gentlemanlike part——

WELLBRED [*rising*]. Good captain, faces about to some other discourse.

BOBADILL [*rising and bowing*]. With your leave, sir, an there were no more men living upon the face of the earth, I should not fancy him, by St George!

MATHEW. Troth, nor I: he is of a rustical cut, I know not how: he doth not carry himself like a gentleman of fashion.

[*Enter* KNOWELL *and* STEPHEN. WELLBRED *greets* KNOWELL, *and they come down stage.* STEPHEN *poses consciously in assumed abstraction; the others remain in their chairs.*

WELLBRED. Ned Knowell! by my soul, welcome! How dost thou, sweet spirit, my genius? Sirrah, these be the two that I writ to thee of: [MATHEW *and* BOBADILL *rise and bow.*] nay, what a drowsy humour is this now! Why dost thou not speak?

KNOWELL. Oh, you are a fine gallant! You sent me a rare letter!

WELLBRED. Why, was't not rare?

KNOWELL. Yes, I'll be sworn, I was ne'er guilty of reading the like. Why, dost thou think that any reasonable creature, especially in the morning, the sober time of the day too, could have mistaken my father for me?

WELLBRED. 'Slid, you jest, I hope.

KNOWELL. Indeed, the best use we can turn it to, is to make a jest

[1] *Cf.* Jaques in *As You Like It*, written about the same time.

on't now: but I'll assure you, my father had the full view of your flourishing style some hour before I saw it.

WELLBRED. What a dull slave was this! But, sirrah, what said he to it, i' faith?

KNOWELL. Nay, I know not what he said, but I have a shrewd guess what he thought.

WELLBRED. What, what?

KNOWELL. Marry, that thou art some strange, dissolute young fellow, and I—a grain or two better for keeping thee company.

WELLBRED. Tut! That thought is like the moon in her last quarter—'twill change shortly. But, sirrah, I pray thee be acquainted with my two hang-by's here; thou wilt take exceeding pleasure in them if thou hear'st 'em once go; my wind-instruments; I'll wind them up—— [*Turning to introduce them he sees* STEPHEN.] But what strange piece of silence is this, the sign of the dumb man?

KNOWELL. Oh, sir, a kinsman of mine, one that may make your music the fuller, an he please; he has his humour, sir.

WELLBRED. Oh, what is't, what is't?

KNOWELL. Nay, I'll neither do your judgment nor his folly that wrong, as to prepare your apprehension; if you can take him, so!

WELLBRED. Well, Captain Bobadill, Master Mathew, pray you know this gentleman here; he is a friend of mine, and one that will deserve your affection. I know not your name, sir [*to* STEPHEN], but I shall be glad of any occasion to render me more familiar to you.

STEPHEN. My name is Master Stephen, sir: I am this gentleman's own cousin, sir: his father is mine uncle, sir: I am somewhat melancholy, but you shall command me, sir, in whatsoever is incident to a gentleman.

BOBADILL [*to* KNOWELL]. Sir, I must tell you this, I am no general man; for Master Wellbred's sake I do communicate with you, and conceive you to be a gentleman of some parts; I love few words.

KNOWELL. And I fewer, sir; I have scarce enough to thank you.

MATHEW [*who has been talking to* STEPHEN]. But are you indeed, sir, so given to it?

STEPHEN. Ay, truly, sir, I am mightily given to melancholy.

MATHEW. Oh, it's your only fine humour, sir: your true melancholy breeds your perfect fine wit, sir. I am melancholy myself, divers times, sir, and then do I no more but take pen and paper,

presently, and overflow you half a score, or a dozen of sonnets at a sitting.

STEPHEN. Truly, sir, and I love such things out of measure.

KNOWELL [*to* WELLBRED]. I' faith, better than in measure, I'll undertake.

MATHEW. Why, I pray you, sir, make use of my study, it's at your service.

STEPHEN. I thank you, sir, I shall be bold I warrant you. Have you a stool there to be melancholy upon?

MATHEW. That I have, sir, and some papers there of my own doing, at idle hours, that you'll say there's some sparks of wit in 'em, when you see them.

STEPHEN [*aside to* KNOWELL]. Cousin, is it well? Am I melancholy enough?

KNOWELL. Oh, ay, excellent.

WELLBRED. Captain Bobadill, why muse you so?

KNOWELL. He is melancholy, too.

BOBADILL. Faith, sir, I was thinking of a most honourable piece of service, was performed to-morrow, being St Mark's day, shall be some ten years now.

KNOWELL. In what place, Captain?

BOBADILL. Why, at the beleag'ring of Strigonium, where, in less than two hours, seven hundred resolute gentlemen, as any were in Europe, lost their lives upon the breach. I'll tell you, gentlemen, it was the best leaguer that ever I beheld with these eyes, except the taking in of—what do you call it?—last year, by the Genoways; but that, of all other, was the most fatal and dangerous exploit that ever I was ranged in, since I first bore arms before the face of the enemy, as I am a gentleman and a soldier!

STEPHEN. So! I had as lief as an angel I could swear as well as that gentleman.

KNOWELL. Then, you were a servitor at both, it seems; at Strigonium, and what do you call't?

BOBADILL. Oh, Lord, sir! By St George, I was the first man that entered the breach; and had I not effected it with resolution, I had been slain if I had had a million of lives.

MATHEW [*to* STEPHEN]. Pray you, mark this discourse, sir.

STEPHEN. So I do.

BOBADILL. Observe me judicially, sweet sir. They had planted me three demi-culverins just in the mouth of the breach; now,

sir, as we were to give on, their master-gunner confronts me with his linstock, ready to give fire: I, spying his intendment, discharged my petronel in his bosom, and with these single arms [*Draws his rapier.*], my poor rapier, ran violently upon the Moors that guarded the ordnance, and put them pell-mell to the sword. [*Shows his rapier.*] It is the most fortunate weapon that ever rid on poor gentleman's thigh. You talk of Morglay, Excalibur, Dorinda, or so: tut! I lend no credit to that is fabled of 'em: I know the virtue of mine own.

STEPHEN. I marvel whether it be a Toledo or no.

BOBADILL. A most perfect Toledo, I assure you, sir.

STEPHEN [*producing a sword*]. I have a countryman of his here.

MATHEW. Pray you, let's see, sir; yes, faith, 'tis.

BOBADILL. This a Toledo! Pish!

STEPHEN. Why do you pish, Captain?

WELLBRED. Where bought you it, Master Stephen?

STEPHEN. Of a scurvy rogue soldier; a hundred of lice go with him! He swore it was a Toledo.

BOBADILL. A poor provant[1] rapier, no better.

MATHEW. Mass, I think it be indeed, now I look on it better.

KNOWELL. Nay, the longer you look on't, the worse. Put it up, put it up.

STEPHEN. Well, I will put it up; but by—I have forgot the Captain's oath, I thought to have sworn by it—an e'er I meet him——

WELLBRED. Oh, it is past help now, sir; you must have patience.

STEPHEN. Whoreson, coney-catching rascal! I could eat the very hilts for anger.

KNOWELL. A sign of good digestion; you have an ostrich stomach, cousin.

STEPHEN. A stomach! Would I had him here, you should see an I had a stomach.

WELLBRED. It's better as it is.

Enter an old SOLDIER

STEPHEN. Oh! Od's lid! By your leave, do you know me, sir?

SOLDIER. Ay, sir, I know you by sight.

STEPHEN. You sold me a rapier, did you not?

[1] 'Provided,' therefore of poor quality. Modern 'issue' in military language.

SOLDIER. Yes, marry, did I, sir.

STEPHEN. You said it was a Toledo, ha?

SOLDIER. True, I did so.

STEPHEN. But it is none.

SOLDIER. No, sir, I confess it, it is none.

STEPHEN. Do you confess it? Gentlemen, bear witness, he has confessed it:—Od's will, an you had not confessed it——

KNOWELL [*ironically*]. Oh, cousin, forbear, forbear!

STEPHEN. Nay, I have done, cousin.

WELLBRED [*laughing*]. Why, you have done like a gentleman: he has confessed it, what would you more?

STEPHEN. Yet, by his leave, he is a rascal, under his favour, do you see. [*Exit* SOLDIER.

KNOWELL. Ay, by his leave he is, and under favour! [*To* WELLBRED] Sirrah, how dost thou like him?

WELLBRED. Oh, it's a most precious fool, make much on him.

BOBADILL [*looking at the remains of his tobacco*]. Body o' me! Here's the remainder of seven pound since yesterday was sevennight. 'Tis your right Trinidado: did you never take any, Master Stephen?

STEPHEN. No, truly, sir: but I'll learn to take it now, since you commend it so. [*He tries to take tobacco, with much coughing, etc.*

BOBADILL. Sir, I have been in the Indies, where this herb grows, where neither myself, nor a dozen gentlemen more of my knowledge, have received the taste of any other nutriment in the world, for the space of one and twenty weeks, but the fume of this simple only: therefore, it cannot be but 'tis most divine. For your deadly poison, your Balsamum and your St John's wort are all mere gulleries and trash to it, especially your Trinidado: your Nicotian is good too. I could say what I know of the virtue of it, for the expulsion of rheums, raw humours, crudities, obstructions, with a thousand of this kind; but I profess myself no quacksalver. Only thus much: by Hercules, I do hold it, and will affirm it before any prince in Europe, to be the most precious weed that ever the earth tendered to the use of man. What, Cob! Pray thee vouchsafe us the lighting of this match.

Enter COB, *the servant*

COB [*lighting the match*]. Od's me, I marvel what pleasure or felicity they have in taking this roguish tobacco. It's good for

nothing but to choke a man, and fill him full of smoke and embers: there were four died out of one house last week with taking of it, and two more the bell went for yesternight; one of them, they say, will never scape it; he voided a bushel of soot yesterday. It will stifle them all in the end, as many as use it: it's little better than rat's bane. [BOBADILL *beats him, and he runs out.*

BOBADILL. A whoreson filthy knave, a dungworm, an excrement. Body o' Cæsar, but that I scorn to let forth so mean a spirit, I'd have stabbed him to the earth.

WELLBRED. Marry, the law forbid, sir.

BOBADILL. By Pharaoh's foot, I would have done it.

STEPHEN. Oh, he swears most admirably! By Pharaoh's foot! Body o' Cæsar!—I shall never do it, sure. Upon mine honour, and by St George!—No, I have not the right grace.

MATHEW. Master Stephen, will you any? By this air, the most divine tobacco that ever I drunk.

STEPHEN. None, I thank you, sir. Oh, this gentleman does it rarely too; but nothing like the other. By this air! [*Practises at the doorpost.*] As I am a gentleman! [*Exeunt* BOBADILL *and* MATHEW.] By——

KNOWELL. Cousin, will you any tobacco?

STEPHEN. I, sir! Upon my reputation! As I have somewhat to be saved, I protest——

WELLBRED. You are a fool: it needs no affidavit.

STEPHEN. Body o' me! By this air! St George! And the foot of Pharaoh!

WELLBRED. Rare! Your cousin's discourse is simply drawn out with oaths.

KNOWELL. 'Tis larded with them. But soft, where's Master Mathew? Gone?

WELLBRED. Oh, let's follow them: Master Mathew is gone to salute his mistress in verse; we shall have the happiness to hear some of his poetry now. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV, SCENES I, II, III, AND VII

A room in Kitely's house. SQUIRE DOWNRIGHT, WELLBRED'S *brother*, *is paying a visit to* DAME KITELY, *his sister.*

DAME KITELY. Alas, brother, what would you have me to do? I cannot help it: you see my brother brings them here; they are his friends.

DOWNRIGHT. His friends! His friends! They do nothing but haunt him up and down like a sort of unlucky spirits. Well, an't were not for your husband's sake I'd make the house too hot for the best on 'em. But, by God's will, 'tis nobody's fault but yours.

DAME KITELY. God's my life! Could I keep out all them, think you? Good faith, you'd mad the patientest body in the world, to hear you talk so, without any sense or reason.

Enter MISTRESS BRIDGET, KITELY'S *sister, and* MASTER MATHEW *and* BOBADILL, *followed at a distance by* WELLBRED, KNOWELL, *and* STEPHEN

BRIDGET [*reading a paper*]. Servant, in troth you are too prodigal
Of your wit's treasure, thus to pour it forth
Upon so mean a subject as my worth.

MATHEW. You say well, mistress, and I mean as well. Marry, it is an elegy, an elegy, an odd toy——

DOWNRIGHT. Oh, here's no foppery! Death! I can endure the stocks better. [*Exit.*

KNOWELL. What ails thy brother?

WELLBRED. Oh, a rhyme to him is worse than cheese, or a bagpipe. [*Coming forward*] Sister, what have you here, verses? Pray you, let's see. [*He takes them and looks at them.*] Who made these verses? They are excellent good.

MATHEW. Oh, Master Wellbred, 'tis your disposition to say so, sir. They were good in the morning: I made them *ex tempore* this morning.

WELLBRED. How? *Ex tempore?*

MATHEW. Ay, I would I might be hanged else; ask Captain Bobadill: he saw me write them, at the—pox on it!—the Star, yonder.

Re-enter DOWNRIGHT

DOWNRIGHT [*aside*]. I am vexed, I can ne'er hold a bone of me still. 'Heart, I think they mean to build and breed here. [*Coming forward*] Come, sirs, you might practise your ruffian tricks somewhere else, and not here, I wuss: this is no tavern or drinking-school, to vent your exploits in.

WELLBRED. How now! Whose cow has calved?

DOWNRIGHT. Marry, that has mine, sir. I'll tell you of it, sir.

I am not afraid of you, nor them neither. You must have your poets and your potlings, your soldados and foolados to follow you up and down the city; and here they must come to domineer and swagger. Sirrah, you ballad-singer, and Slops your fellow there, get you out, get you home; or, by this steel, I'll cut off your ears, and that presently.

WELLBRED. 'Slight, stay, let's see what he dare do: cut off his ears! Cut a whetstone! You are an ass, do you see; touch any man here, and, by this hand, I'll run my rapier to the hilts in you.

DOWNRIGHT. Yea, that would I fain see, boy.

[*They all draw, except* BOBADILL.

DAME KITELY. Oh, Jesu, murder!

BRIDGET. Help, help! [DAME KITELY *and* BRIDGET *run out.*

BOBADILL [*to* DOWNRIGHT]. Well, sirrah, you Holofernes: by my hand, I will pink your flesh full of holes with my rapier for this: I will, by this good heaven! Nay, let him come, let him come, gentlemen; by the body of St George, I'll not kill him.

[*They let* DOWNRIGHT *go, and he goes up to* BOBADILL, *who retreats hastily, and does not draw.*

DOWNRIGHT. Come, Pharaoh's foot, draw, to your tools; draw, gipsy, or I'll thrash you.

BOBADILL [*nervously*]. Gentleman of valour, I do believe in thee; hear me——

DOWNRIGHT. Draw your weapon then.

BOBADILL. Tall man, I never thought on it till now—— Body o' me, I had a warrant of the peace served on me even now as I came along. This gentleman saw it, Master Mathew.

DOWNRIGHT. 'Sdeath, you will not draw then.

[*He disarms and beats him.* BOBADILL *and* MATHEW *run away.*

DOWNRIGHT. Prate again, as you like this, you bragging coystril! You'll control the point, you! A sort of lewd rake-hells, that care neither for God nor the devil. And they must come here to read ballads and roguery and trash: I'll mar the knot of you ere I sleep, perhaps! [*Exit.*

WELLBRED. Come, let's go: this is one of my brother's ancient humours, this.

STEPHEN. I pray none of us be hurt by his ancient humour.

[*Exeunt.*

PHILASTER

Beaumont and Fletcher

(1610)

The usurping King of Sicily has made heir to his throne Pharamond, Prince of Spain, who is a suitor for the hand of his daughter Arethusa. Philaster, the rightful heir, is in love with Arethusa, and she with him. A girl named Euphrasia falls in love with Philaster, and disguises herself as a boy under the name of Bellario. Philaster employs her as a page, and lends her to the Princess to go between them. Pharamond is caught in an intrigue with a Court lady, Megra, who, to divert the King's anger from Pharamond, accuses Arethusa of misconduct with her page. Philaster loses faith in both Arethusa and Bellario, but is won back to believe in them when they offer their lives for him. Finally Philaster marries Arethusa, and wins the King's favour by quelling a rebellion. Pharamond returns to Spain, and Bellario discloses her sex.

This is a good example of the tragi-comedy; in spite of a considerable amount of comic relief the plot develops like a tragedy, but ends in happiness and reconciliation. No idea of the play as a whole can be given in a short extract, but the scenes printed below illustrate the delicate imagination of the authors, and the poetic beauty and dramatic subtlety of their dialogue. The first scene is between Arethusa and Bellario, on the latter's first arrival. Then we pass to Philaster's denunciation, first of Bellario, and then of Arethusa, when he hears the false report of their disloyalty. No scenery is needed. Elizabethan costumes.

Act II, Scene iii

ARETHUSA *is in her chamber, talking to her* MAID.

ARETHUSA. Where's the boy?

MAID. Within, madam.

ARETHUSA. 'Tis a pretty, sad-talking boy, is it not?
Asked you his name?

MAID. No, madam. He's here.

Enter BELLARIO, *richly dressed*

ARETHUSA. Sir,
You are sad to change your service; is't not so?

BELLARIO. Madam, I have not changed; I wait on you,
To do him service.

ARETHUSA. Thou disclaim'st in me.
Tell me thy name.
BELLARIO. Bellario.
ARETHUSA. Thou canst sing and play?
BELLARIO. If grief will give me leave, madam, I can.
ARETHUSA. Alas, what kind of grief can thy years know?
Hadst thou a curst [1] master when thou went'st to school?
Thou art not capable of other grief;
Thy brows and cheeks are smooth as waters be
When no breath troubles them: believe me, boy,
Care seeks out wrinkled brows and hollow eyes,
And builds himself caves, to abide in them.
Come, sir, tell me truly, does your lord love me?
BELLARIO. Love, madam! I know not what it is.
ARETHUSA. Canst thou know grief, and never yet knewst love?
Thou art deceived, boy. Does he speak of me
As if he wished me well?
BELLARIO. If it be love
To forget all respect of his own friends
In thinking of your face; if it be love
To sit cross-armed and sigh away the day,
Mingled with starts, crying your name as loud
And hastily as men i' the streets do fire;
If it be love to weep himself away
When he but hears of any lady dead
Or killed, because it might have been your chance;
If, when he goes to rest (which will not be),
'Twixt every prayer he says, to name you once,
As others drop a bead, be to be in love,
Then, madam, I dare swear he loves you.
ARETHUSA. Oh, you're a cunning boy, and taught to lie
For your lord's credit! But thou knowst a lie
That bears this sound is welcomer to me
Than any truth that says he loves me not.
Lead the way, boy. [*To the* MAID] Do you attend me too.
[*To* BELLARIO] 'Tis thy lord's business hastes me thus. Away!
[*Exeunt*

[1] cross.

Act III, Scene 1[1]

PHILASTER *is awaiting* BELLARIO, *for whom he has sent, after hearing the false report of his disloyalty.*

PHILASTER. Oh that I had a sea
Within my breast, to quench the fire I feel!
It more afflicts me now, to know by whom
This deed is done, than simply that 'tis done.
See, see, you gods,
He walks still. [*Enter* BELLARIO.] And the face you let him wear
When he was innocent is still the same,
Not blasted! Is this justice? Do you mean
To intrap mortality, that you allow
Treason so smooth a brow? I cannot now
Think he is guilty.

BELLARIO. Health to you, my lord!
The Princess doth commend her love, her life,
And this, unto you. [*Gives a letter.*

PHILASTER. Oh, Bellario,
Now I perceive she loves me: she does show it
In loving thee, my boy: she has made thee brave.[2]

BELLARIO. My lord, she has attired me past my wish.

PHILASTER. Tell me, my boy, how doth the Princess use thee?
For I shall guess her love to me by that.

BELLARIO. Scarce like her servant, but as if I were
Something allied to her, or had preserved
Her life three times by my fidelity;
As I'd use one that's left unto my trust,
For whom my life should pay if he met harm,
So does she use me.

PHILASTER. Why, this is wondrous well!
But what kind language does she feed thee with?

BELLARIO. Why, she does tell me she will trust my youth
With all her loving secrets, and does call me
Her pretty servant; bids me weep no more
For leaving you: she'll see my services
Regarded: and such words of that soft strain,

[1] This scene can be played in front of the act-drop curtain while the following scene is being set.
[2] dressed you finely.

That I am nearer weeping when she ends
Than ere she spake.

PHILASTER [*grimly*]. This is much better still.

BELLARIO. Are you not ill, my lord?

PHILASTER. Ill? No, Bellario. Thou art deceived.
And she strokes thy head?

BELLARIO. Yes.

PHILASTER. And she does kiss thee, boy, ha?

BELLARIO. How, my lord?

PHILASTER. She kisses thee?

BELLARIO. Not so, my lord.

PHILASTER. Come, come, I know she does.

BELLARIO. No, by my life.

PHILASTER. Why, then, she does not love me. Come, she does.
I bade her do it; I charged her, by all charms
Of love between us, by the hope of peace
We should enjoy, to yield thee all delights.
Come, tell me, gentle boy, is not her breath
Sweet as Arabian winds when fruits are ripe?
Is she not all a lasting mine of joy? [BELLARIO *looks amazed.*
Thou thinkst I will be angry with thee. Come,
Thou shalt know all my drift: I hate her more
Than I love happiness, and placed thee there
To pry with narrow eyes into her deeds.
Hast thou discovered? Is she fallen to lust,
As I would wish her? Speak some comfort to me.

BELLARIO. My lord, you did mistake the boy you sent:
Had she a sin that way, hid from the world,
Beyond the name of lust, I would not aid
Her base desires: but what I came to know
As servant to her, I would not reveal,
To make my life last ages.

PHILASTER. Oh, my heart!
This is a salve worse than the main disease. [*Draws his sword.*
Tell me thy thoughts; for I will know the least
That dwells within thee, or will rip thy heart
To know it: I will see thy thoughts as plain
As I do now thy face.

BELLARIO [*kneeling*]. Why, so you do.
She is (for aught I know), by all the gods,

As chaste as ice! But were she foul as hell,
And I did know it thus, the breath of kings,
The points of swords, tortures, nor bulls of brass,
Should draw it from me.

PHILASTER. Then it is no time
To dally with thee: I will take thy life,
For I do hate thee: I could curse thee now.

BELLARIO. If you do hate, you could not curse me worse:
The gods have not a punishment in store
Greater for me than is your hate.

PHILASTER. Fie, fie!
Fear'st thou not death?
Can boys contemn that?

BELLARIO. Oh, what boy is he
Can be content to live to be a man,
That sees the best of men thus passionate,
Thus, without reason?

PHILASTER. Oh, but thou dost not know
What 'tis to die.

BELLARIO. Yes, I do know, my lord.
'Tis less than to be born; a lasting sleep;
A quiet resting from all jealousy,
A thing we all pursue; I know, besides,
It is but giving over of a game
That must be lost.

PHILASTER. But there are pains, false boy,
For perjured souls: think but on these, and then
Thy heart will melt, and thou wilt utter all.

BELLARIO. May they fall upon me whilst I live,
If I be perjured, or have ever thought
Of that you charge me with! If I be false,
Send me to suffer in those punishments
You speak of: kill me!

PHILASTER. Oh, what should I do?
Why, who can but believe him? He does swear
So earnestly, that if it were not true,
The gods would not endure him. [*Sheathes his sword.*] Rise, Bellario.
I cannot urge thee further. But, good boy,
Let me not see thee more. Something is done

That will distract me, that will make me mad,
If I behold thee. If thou tender'st me
Let me not see thee.

BELLARIO. I will fly as far
As there is morning, ere I give distaste
To that most honoured mind. But through these tears,
Shed at my hopeless parting, I can see
A world of treason practised upon you,
And her, and me. Farewell for evermore! [*Exit.*

PHILASTER. Blessing be with thee,
Whatever thou deserv'st! Oh, where shall I
Go bathe this body? Nature too unkind,
That made no medicine for a troubled mind!

Act III, Scene II

ARETHUSA'S *chamber. The King, who has heard of the scandal, has just told her to dismiss* BELLARIO. ARETHUSA *is sitting at her table, almost in tears.* PHILASTER *enters unheard, watches her a moment, and then startles her by speaking.*

PHILASTER. Peace to your fairest thoughts, dearest mistress!

ARETHUSA. Oh, my dearest servant, I have a war within me!

PHILASTER. He must be more than man that makes these crystals
Run into rivers. Sweetest fair, the cause?

ARETHUSA. Oh, my best love, that boy!

PHILASTER. What boy?

ARETHUSA. The pretty boy you gave me——

PHILASTER. What of him?

ARETHUSA. Must be no more mine: they are jealous of him.

PHILASTER. Let him go.

ARETHUSA. Oh, cruel!
Are you hard-hearted too? Who shall now tell you
How much I love you? Who shall swear it to you?
Wake tedious nights in stories of your praise?
Who shall now sing your crying elegies,
And strike a sad soul into senseless pictures,
And make them mourn? Who shall take up his lute,
And touch it till he crown a silent sleep
Upon my eyelids, making me dream and cry,
"Oh, my dear, dear Philaster!"

PHILASTER. Mistress,
Forget the boy; I'll get thee a far better.
ARETHUSA. Oh, never, never such a boy again
As my Bellario!
PHILASTER. All this passion for a boy?
ARETHUSA. He was your boy, and you put him to me,
And the loss of such must have a mourning for.
PHILASTER. Oh, thou forgetful woman!
ARETHUSA. How, my lord?
PHILASTER. False Arethusa!
Hast thou a medicine to restore my wits
When I have lost them? If not, leave to talk,
And do thus. [*Throws himself down.*
ARETHUSA. Do what, sir? Would you sleep?
PHILASTER. For ever, Arethusa. Oh, you gods,
Give me a worthy patience! Have I stood
Naked, alone, the shock of many fortunes?
Have I seen mischiefs numberless and mighty
Grow like a sea upon me? Have I taken
Danger as stern as death into my bosom,
And laughed upon it, made it but a mirth?
Do I bear all this bravely, and must sink
Under a woman's falsehood? Oh, that boy,
That cursed boy!
ARETHUSA. Nay, then, I am betrayed!
PHILASTER. Now you may take that little right I have
To this poor kingdom: give it to your joy:
For I have no joy in it. Some far place
Where never womankind durst set her foot
I'll seek, and live to curse you:
There dig a cave, and preach to birds and beasts
What woman is, and help to save them from you;
How heaven is in your eyes, but in your hearts
More hell than hell has; how your thoughts are woven
With thousand changes in one subtle web,
And worn so by you; how that foolish man,
That reads the story of a woman's face
And dies believing it, is lost for ever;
How all the good you have is but a shadow,
I' the morning with you, and at night behind you,

Past and forgotten. These sad texts,
Till my last hour, I am bound to utter of you.
So, farewell all my woe, all my delight. [*Exit.*

ARETHUSA. Be merciful, ye gods, and strike me dead!
Alas, where shall a woman turn her eyes
To find out constancy? [*Exit.*

THE DUCHESS OF MALFI

JOHN WEBSTER
(1614)

The young widowed Duchess of Malfi has angered her brothers, Duke Ferdinand and the Cardinal, by marrying her steward Antonio. Ferdinand determines to torture her, and then murder her and her husband and children. His accomplice is Bosola, an attendant of the Duchess; villain as he is, he is almost revolted by Ferdinand's cruelty. Ferdinand visits the Duchess in the dark, gives her a dead man's hand, shows her a waxwork tableau to make her believe her husband and children dead, terrifies her with a mask of madmen, and finally has her strangled. No scenery or properties are needed beyond a few chairs and a table. Costumes Elizabethan.

ACT IV, SCENES I AND II

The scene is an apartment of the DUCHESS'S *palace at Malfi, where she is confined. The* DUCHESS *is in despair, and exhausted by the brutality of her brother.* BOSOLA *stands by her, for the time really moved by her misery.*

BOSOLA. Come, you must live.

DUCHESS. That's the greatest torture souls feel in hell,
In hell, that they must live, and cannot die.
The Church enjoins fasting:
I'll starve myself to death.

BOSOLA. Leave this vain sorrow.
Things being at the worst begin to mend: the bee
When he hath shot his sting into your hand,
May then play with your eyelid.

DUCHESS. Good comfortable fellow,
Persuade a wretch that's broke upon the wheel
To have all his bones new set; entreat him live
To be executed again. Who must despatch me?

I account this world a tedious theatre,
For I do play a part in't 'gainst my will.
BOSOLA. Come, be of comfort; I will save your life.
DUCHESS. Indeed, I have not leisure to tend
So small a business. [*Enter a* SERVANT.] What are you?
SERVANT. One that wishes you long life.
DUCHESS. I would thou wert hanged for the horrible curse
Thou hast given me: I shall shortly grow one
Of the miracles of pity. I'll go pray;—
No, I'll go curse.
BOSOLA. Oh, fie!
DUCHESS [*gazing out of the window*]. I could curse the stars——
BOSOLA. Oh, fearful!
DUCHESS. And those three smiling seasons of the year
Into a Russian winter: nay, the world
To its first chaos.
BOSOLA. Look you, the stars shine still.
DUCHESS. Oh, but you must
Remember, my curse hath a great way to go.—
Plagues, that make lanes through largest families,
Consume them!—
BOSOLA. Fie, lady!
DUCHESS. Let heaven a little while cease crowning martyrs,
To punish them!—
Go, howl them this, and say I long to bleed:
It is some mercy when men kill with speed.

[*Exeunt* BOSOLA *and* SERVANT. *The* DUCHESS *is left alone for a few moments, and a fearful noise of insane laughter and yelling and wild song is heard outside.* CARIOLA, *the* DUCHESS's *maid, runs in.*

DUCHESS. What hideous noise was that?
CARIOLA. 'Tis the wild consort
Of madmen, lady, which your tyrant brother
Hath placed about your lodging: this tyranny,
I think, was never practised till this hour.
DUCHESS. Indeed, I thank him: nothing but noise and folly
Can keep me in my right wits: whereas reason
And silence make me stark mad. Sit down;
Discourse to me some dismal tragedy.
CARIOLA. Oh, 'twill increase your melancholy.

DUCHESS. Thou art deceiv'd:
To hear of greater grief would lessen mine.
This is a prison?
CARIOLA. Yes, but you shall live
To shake this durance off.
DUCHESS. Thou art a fool:
The robin-redbreast and the nightingale
Never live long in cages.
CARIOLA. Pray, dry your eyes. [*A pause*
What think you of, madam?
DUCHESS. Of nothing;
When I muse thus, I sleep.
CARIOLA. Like a madman, with your eyes open?
DUCHESS. Dost thou think we shall know one another
In the other world?
CARIOLA. Yes, out of question.
DUCHESS. Oh that it were possible we might
But hold some two days' conference with the dead!
From them I should learn somewhat, I am sure,
I never shall know here.

Enter a SERVANT

SERVANT. I am come to tell you
Your brother hath intended you some sport.
A great physician, when the Pope was sick
Of a deep melancholy, presented him
With several sorts of madmen, which wild object,
Being full of change and sport, forc'd him to laugh,
And so the imposthume broke: the selfsame cure
The Duke intends on you.
DUCHESS. Sit, Cariola.—Let them loose when you please,
For I am chain'd to endure all your tyranny.

[" *Enter* MADMEN. *Here this song is sung to a dismal kind of music by a madman.*" *This mad mask must not be funny, but as gruesome as possible, and there should be plenty of 'business.'*

Oh, let us howl some heavy note,
Some deadly, doggèd howl,
Sounding as from the threatening throat
Of beasts and fatal fowl!

As ravens, screech-owls, bulls, and bears,
We'll bell, and bawl our parts,
Till irksome noise have cloyed your ears
And corrosived your hearts.
At last, whenas our quire wants breath,
Our bodies being blest,
We'll sing, like swans, to welcome death
And die in love and rest.

FIRST MADMAN. Doomsday not come yet! I'll draw it nearer by a perspective, or make a glass that shall set all the world on fire upon an instant. I cannot sleep; my pillow is stuffed with a litter of porcupines.

SECOND MADMAN. Hell is a mere glass house, where the devils are continually blowing up women's souls on hollow irons, and the fire never goes out.

THIRD MADMAN [*to* FOURTH MADMAN]. What's he? A rope-maker?

FOURTH MADMAN. No, no, no, a snuffling knave that, while he shows the tombs, will have his hand in your pocket.

FIFTH MADMAN. All the college may throw their caps at me: I have made a soap-boiler costive: it was my masterpiece.

["*Here a dance of* MADMEN, *with music answerable thereto; after which* BOSOLA, *like an old man, enters.*"

DUCHESS. Is he mad too?

SERVANT. Pray, question him, I'll leave you.

[*Exeunt* SERVANT *and* MADMEN.

BOSOLA. I am come to make thy tomb.

DUCHESS. Ha! My tomb!
Thou speak'st as if I lay upon my deathbed,
Gasping for breath; dost thou perceive me sick?

BOSOLA. Yes, and the more dangerously, since thy sickness is insensible.

DUCHESS. Thou art not mad, sure: dost know me?

BOSOLA. Yes: thou art a box of worm-seed. What's this flesh? A little crudded milk, fantastical puff-paste. Didst thou ever see a lark in a cage? Such is the soul in the body: this world is like her little turf of grass, and the heaven o'er our heads, like her looking-glass, only gives us a miserable knowledge of the small compass of our prison.

DUCHESS. I am the Duchess of Malfi still.

BOSOLA. That makes thy sleep so broken.
Glories, like glow-worms, afar off shine bright,
But looked to near, have neither heat nor light.
DUCHESS. Thou art very plain.
BOSOLA. My trade is to flatter the dead, not the living: I am a tomb-maker.
DUCHESS. And thou comest to make my tomb?
BOSOLA. Yes.
["*Enter* EXECUTIONERS, *with coffin, cords, and a bell.*"
Here is a present from your princely brothers;
And may it arrive welcome, for it brings
Last benefit, last sorrow.
DUCHESS. Let me see it:
I have so much obedience in my blood,
I wish it in their veins to do them good.
BOSOLA [*showing her the coffin*]. This is your last presence-chamber. [*The* DUCHESS *draws back in horror.*
CARIOLA. Oh, my sweet lady!
DUCHESS. Peace; it affrights not me.
BOSOLA. I am the common bellman,
That usually is sent to condemned persons
The night before they suffer. Listen. [*He chants.*

Hark, now everything is still,
The screech-owl and the whistler shrill
Call upon our dame aloud,
And bid her quickly don her shroud!
Much you had of land and rent;
Your length in clay's now competent:
A long war disturb'd your mind;
Here your perfect peace is signed.
Of what is't fools make such vain keeping?
Sin their conception, their birth weeping,
Their life a general mist of error,
Their death a hideous storm of terror.
Strew your hair with powders sweet,
Don clean linen, bathe your feet,
And (the foul fiend more to check)
A crucifix let bless your neck:
'Tis now full tide 'tween night and day;
End your groan, and come away.

CARIOLA. Hence, villains, tyrants, murderers! Alas!
What will you do with my lady? Call for help! [*She screams.*
DUCHESS. To whom? To our next neighbours? They are mad-folks.
BOSOLA [*to* EXECUTIONERS]. Remove that noise.
DUCHESS. Farewell, Cariola.
CARIOLA. I will die with her.
DUCHESS. I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep.
[CARIOLA *is forced out by the* EXECUTIONERS.
Now what you please:
What death?
BOSOLA. Strangling: here are your executioners.
DUCHESS. I forgive them:
The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o' the lungs
Would do as much as they do.
BOSOLA. Doth not death fright you?
DUCHESS. Who would be afraid on't,
Knowing to meet such excellent company
In the other world?
BOSOLA. Yet, methinks,
The manner of your death should much afflict you:
This cord should terrify you.
DUCHESS. Not a whit:
What would it pleasure me to have my throat cut
With diamonds? Or to be smothered
With cassia? Or to be shot to death with pearls?
I know death hath ten thousand several doors
For men to take their exits. Tell my brothers
That I perceive death, now I am well awake,
Best gift is they can give or I can take.
I would fain put off my last woman's fault,
I'd not be tedious to you.
FIRST EXECUTIONER. We are ready.
DUCHESS. Bestow my breath how please you, but my body
Bestow upon my women, will you?
FIRST EXECUTIONER. Yes.
DUCHESS. Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength
Must pull down heaven upon me:—

Yet stay: heaven-gates are not so highly arch'd
As princes' palaces; they that enter there
Must go upon their knees. [*Kneels.*] Come, violent death,
Serve for mandragora to make me sleep!—
Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out,
They then may feed in quiet.

["*The* EXECUTIONERS *strangle the* DUCHESS."

BOSOLA. Where's the waiting-woman?
Fetch her: some other strangle the children.

["CARIOLA *and* CHILDREN *are brought in by the* EXECUTIONERS, *who presently strangle the* CHILDREN."

Look you, there sleeps your mistress.

CARIOLA. Oh, you are damn'd
Perpetually for this! My turn is next;
Is't not so ordered?

BOSOLA. Yes, and I am glad
You are so well prepared for't.

CARIOLA. You are deceived, sir.
I am not prepared for it, I will not die.

BOSOLA. Come, despatch her.—

CARIOLA. I will not die, I must not; I am contracted
To a young gentleman. [*She struggles and screams.*

FIRST EXECUTIONER [*showing her the rope-noose*]. Here's your wedding-ring.

CARIOLA. Let me but speak with the Duke: I'll discover
Treason to his person.

BOSOLA. Delays: throttle her.

FIRST EXECUTIONER. She bites and scratches.

CARIOLA. If you kill me now
I am damn'd: I have not been at confession
This two years.

["*The* EXECUTIONERS *strangle* CARIOLA."

BOSOLA. Bear her into the next room.
Let these lie still.

["*Exeunt the* EXECUTIONERS *with the body of* CARIOLA: *enter* FERDINAND."

FERDINAND. Is she dead?

BOSOLA. She is what
You'd have her. But here begin your pity:

["*Shows the* CHILDREN *strangled.*"

Alas, how have these offended?

FERDINAND. The death
Of young wolves is never to be pitied.
BOSOLA. Do you not weep?
Other sins only speak: murder shrieks out:
The element of water moistens the earth,
But blood flies upwards and bedews the heavens.
FERDINAND. Cover her face: mine eyes dazzle: she died young.
BOSOLA. I think not so; her infelicity
Seem'd to have years too many.
FERDINAND. By what authority didst thou execute
This bloody sentence?
BOSOLA. By yours.
FERDINAND. Mine! Was I her judge?
Did any ceremonial form of law
Doom her to not-being? Did a complete jury
Deliver her conviction up i' the court?
Where shalt thou find this judgment register'd,
Unless in hell? See, like a bloody fool,
Thou'st forfeited thy life, and thou shalt die for't.
BOSOLA. The office of justice is perverted quite
When one thief hangs another. Who shall dare
To reveal this? You, not I, shall quake for't.
FERDINAND. Never look upon me more.
BOSOLA. Why, fare thee well.
Your brother and yourself are worthy men:
You have a pair of hearts are hollow graves,
Rotten, and rotting others. I stand like one
That long hath ta'en a sweet and golden dream:
I am angry with myself, now that I wake.
FERDINAND. Get thee into some unknown part o' the world,
That I may never see thee. [*Exit.*
BOSOLA. He's much distracted. Off, my painted honour!
I would not change my peace of conscience
For all the wealth of Europe.
[*Looking at the* DUCHESS's *body*] I'll bear thee hence,
And execute thy last will: that's deliver
Thy body to the reverent dispose
Of some good women: that the cruel tyrant
Shall not deny me. Then I'll post to Milan,

Where somewhat I will speedily enact
Worth my dejection.

[*He takes up the body of the* DUCHESS *and goes out.*

A WOMAN KILLED WITH KINDNESS

THOMAS HEYWOOD

(1603)

The extract given below is a good instance of Heywood's most remarkable quality—his realism. The scene, which is laid in a country-house, is of the kind which Heywood treated more successfully than any other dramatist of his time.

It is difficult to do justice to this play in an extract—it is one of the best plays of the period. Master Frankford, a country squire, has taken a great fancy to young Wendoll, and has made him free of his house. Wendoll, however, makes love to Mistress Frankford in his host's absence, and their infidelity is reported to Frankford by the butler, Nicholas. Frankford, when he has satisfied himself of the truth of what he hears, instead of behaving in the customary way, gives his wife a separate estate and all that she wants, only refuses to have any more to do with her. She is overcome with remorse and misery, and dies of a broken heart.

In this scene we see Nicholas making his report, and the Squire's subsequent behaviour. Cranwell is another guest in the house: he is naturally taciturn and shy, and all the more so because he realizes what is going on and feels himself in an awkward position. Frankford is a genial, lovable, and yet masterful man—a unique character in the drama of this period. His wife is weak—not naturally vicious, but at present quite under the spell of Wendoll, who is an unscrupulous rogue, imagining himself perfectly secure in the good opinion of his host, and therefore taking little trouble to conceal his feelings. It is important to achieve the impression of a seventeenth-century country-house, which can be done with curtains, plain oak furniture, a few rugs, and some silver. Elizabethan costume.

ACT III, SCENE II

"*A sitting-room in* FRANKFORD'S *house. Enter serving-men, one with a voider and wooden knife*[1] *to take away; another with the salt and bread; another with the tablecloth and napkins;*

[1] A 'voider' was a butler's tray or basket, and the wooden knife was for sweeping the scraps into the voider. The servants were on their way from the kitchen to the dining-hall, where they had cleared away their master's meal and were about to lay their own.

another with the carpet;[1] JENKIN *follows them with two lights.*"

JENKIN. So, march in order, and retire in battle-array. My master and the guests have supped already, all's taken away: here, now spread for the serving-men in the hall. Hark! My master calls to lay more billets upon the fire. Come, come! One spread the carpet in the parlour, and stand ready to snuff the lights; the rest be ready to prepare their stomachs. More lights in the hall there! Come, Nich'las. [*Exeunt all but* NICHOLAS.

NICHOLAS. I cannot eat: but had I Wendoll's heart
I would eat that: the rogue grows impudent.
I'll tell my master, by this air, I will!
Fall what may fall, I'll tell him. Here he comes.

"*Enter* FRANKFORD, *brushing the crumbs from his clothes with a napkin, as newly risen from supper*"

FRANKFORD. Nicholas, what make you here? Why are not you
At supper in the hall among your fellows?

NICHOLAS [*nervously*]. Master, I stayed your rising from the board
To speak with you.

FRANKFORD. Be brief, then, gentle Nicholas;
My wife and guests attend me in the parlour.

NICHOLAS [*suddenly*]. 'Sblood, sir, I love you better than your wife.
I'll make it good.

FRANKFORD [*surprised and angry*]. You are a knave, and I have much ado
With wonted patience to contain my rage,
And not to break thy pate. Thou art a knave:
I'll turn you, with your base comparisons,
Out of my doors.

NICHOLAS. Do, do: there is not room
For Wendoll and for me both in one house.
Oh, master, master, that Wendoll is a villain!

FRANKFORD. Ay, saucy! [*He raises his hand to strike him.*

NICHOLAS. Strike, strike; do, strike; yet hear me: I am no fool,
I know a villain when I see him act

[1] The 'carpet' is the cover for the table in the parlour, where the company have retired after dinner.

Deeds of a villain. Master, master, that base slave
Betrays my mistress and dishonours you.

FRANKFORD. Thou hast killed me with a weapon whose sharp point
Hath pricked quite through and through my shivering heart.
What didst thou say?
It is as hard to enter my belief
As Dives into heaven.

NICHOLAS. I can gain nothing;
They are two that never wronged me. I knew before
That 'twas a thankless office, and perhaps——

FRANKFORD. What instance hast thou of this strange report?

NICHOLAS. Eyes, eyes.

FRANKFORD. Thy eyes may be deceived, I tell thee;
For, should an angel from the heavens drop down,
And preach this to me that thyself hast told,
He should have much ado to win belief;
In both their loves I am so confident.
No more! to supper, and command your fellows
To attend us and the strangers. Not a word,
I charge thee on thy life!

NICHOLAS. I am dumb: and now that I have eased my stomach,
I will go fill my stomach. [*Exit.*

FRANKFORD [*after pacing the room in deep thought for a few moments*]. May this be true? Oh, may it, can it be?
Is it by any wonder possible?
Oh, God, oh, God! No, I will lose these thoughts:
Distraction I will banish from my brow,
And from my looks exile sad discontent.
Their wonted favours in my tongue shall flow;
Till I know all, I'll nothing seem to know.
[*Calling*] Lights, and a table there! Wife, Master Wendoll,
And gentle Master Cranwell!

"*Enter* MISTRESS FRANKFORD, WENDOLL, CRANWELL, NICHOLAS, *and* JENKIN, *with cards, carpets, stools, and other necessaries*"

FRANKFORD [*assuming his customary geniality*]. Oh, Master Cranwell, you are a stranger here,
And often balk my house: faith, y'are a churl!
Now we have supped, a table and to cards.

JENKIN. A pack of cards, Nicholas, and a carpet to cover the table. Where's Cicely with her counters and her box? Candles and candlesticks there! Fie, we have such a household of serving-creatures! Unless it be Nick and I, there's not one amongst them all can say bo to a goose. Well done, Nick.

[" *They spread a carpet, set down lights and cards.*" *All the servants go out except* NICHOLAS, *who remains to snuff candles, etc.*

FRANKFORD. Come, Master Cranwell: shall you and I take them up?

CRANWELL. At your pleasure, sir. What shall our game be?

MISTRESS FRANKFORD. I can play at nothing so well as Double-ruff.

FRANKFORD. If Master Wendoll and my wife be together, there's no playing against them.

NICHOLAS. I can tell you, sir, the game that Master Wendoll is best at.

WENDOLL. What game is that, Nick?

NICHOLAS. Marry, sir, Knave-out-of-doors.

[WENDOLL *laughs heartily: he and* MISTRESS FRANKFORD *have no idea that they are suspected, and are careless of concealing the understanding between them. All their remarks have a double meaning, but* FRANKFORD *and* NICHOLAS *see through them, while they think that* FRANKFORD'S *two-edged remarks are unintentional.*

MISTRESS FRANKFORD. Husband, shall we play at Saint?

FRANKFORD. No, we'll none of Saint.
You are best at New-cut, wife: you'll play at that.

WENDOLL. If you play at New-cut, I am soonest hitter of any here, for a wager.

FRANKFORD [*aside*]. 'Tis me they play on. [*Aloud*] Well, as you please for that.
Lift[1] who shall deal.

MISTRESS FRANKFORD. The least in sight: what are you, Master Wendoll?

WENDOLL. I am a knave.

NICHOLAS [*aside*]. I'll swear it.

FRANKFORD. Well, the cards are mine. [*He deals, and misdeals.*
I have lost my dealing.

[1] cut.

WENDOLL. Sir, the fault's in me:
This queen I have more than mine own, you see.
Give me the stock.[1]
FRANKFORD. My mind's not on my game.
You have served me a bad trick,[2] Master Wendoll.
WENDOLL. Sir, you must take your lot. To end this strife,
I know I have dealt better with your wife.
FRANKFORD. Thou hast dealt falsely, then. [*He rises.*
I will give o'er the set; I am not well.
Come, who will hold my cards?
MISTRESS FRANKFORD. Not well, sweet Master Frankford?
Alas, what ails you? 'Tis some sudden qualm.
WENDOLL. How long have you been so, Master Frankford?
FRANKFORD. Sir, I was lusty, and I had my health,
But I grew ill when you began to deal.
Take hence this table. Gentle Master Cranwell,
You are welcome; see your chamber at your pleasure.
I am sorry that this megrim takes me so,
I cannot sit and bear you company.
Go, take some lights, and show him to his chamber.
[*Exeunt* CRANWELL *and* NICHOLAS.
MISTRESS FRANKFORD [*calling*]. A nightgown[3] for my husband; quickly there:
It is some rheum or cold. [SERVANT *brings in gown and exit.*
WENDOLL. Now, in good faith, this illness you have got
By sitting late without your gown.
FRANKFORD. I know it, Master Wendoll.
Go, go to bed, lest you complain like me.
Wife, prithee, wife, into my bedchamber;
Leave me my gown and light; I'll walk away my fit.
WENDOLL. Sweet sir, good night.
FRANKFORD. Myself, good night.
[*Exit* WENDOLL, *blowing a kiss to* MISTRESS FRANKFORD.
MISTRESS FRANKFORD. Shall I attend you, husband?
FRANKFORD. No, gentle wife, thou'lt catch cold in thy head;
Prithee, be gone, sweet; I'll make haste to bed.
MISTRESS FRANKFORD. No sleep will fasten on mine eyes, you know,
Until you come.

[1] pack. [2] hand. [3] dressing-gown.

FRANKFORD. Sweet Nan, I prithee go.

[*Exit* MISTRESS FRANKFORD. *He takes a turn up and down the room.*

I am resolved. To bed then, not to rest:
Care lodges in my brain, grief in my breast. [*Exit.*

The following plays are recommended for study. They are all to be found in the "Mermaid" edition of "The Best Plays of the Old Dramatists." The extracts given by Charles Lamb in his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets*, and his notes thereon, should also be read, and many of them could be arranged for acting in a similar way to those given above.

	Comedies	*Tragedies*
CHAPMAN		*Bussy d'Ambois* (1598)
MARSTON	*Antonio and Mellida* (1599)	
CHAPMAN, MARSTON, JONSON	*Eastward Ho* (1605)	
JONSON	*Every Man in his Humour* (1598)	*Sejanus* (1603)
	Volpone (1605)	
	Epicene, or The Silent Woman (1609)	
	Bartholomew Fair (1614)	
BEAUMONT, FLETCHER	*The Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1609)	*The Maid's Tragedy* (1611)
	Philaster (1610)	
	The Wild-goose Chase (1621)	
WEBSTER		*The White Devil* (1611)
		The Duchess of Malfi (1614)
DEKKER	*The Shoemaker's Holiday* (1599)	
HEYWOOD		*A Woman Killed with Kindness* (1603)
	The Wise Woman of Hogsdon (before 1638)	
	The Fair Maid of the West, Part I (1617)	
MASSINGER	*The Maid of Honour* (1622)	
	A New Way to Pay Old Debts (1626)	
	The Great Duke of Florence (1627)	
FORD		*The Broken Heart* (1633)

N.B.—Some of the dates are approximate.

CHAPTER V

RESTORATION DRAMA

I. Social Conditions: Their Effect on the Drama. It is of paramount importance to remember that the plays of this period were written for a small section of the community. The drama was no longer in any sense a national institution, as it had been in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and as it in some degree remained, in spite of Puritan opposition and the demands of an increasingly extravagant Court, up to the closing of the theatres in 1642. When the theatres were reopened they were under the direct patronage of the King ; the managers and authors were all members of the Court circle, and the actors were practically Court servants. The general public was completely ignored. Drama depends always upon its audience; unlike other forms of art and literature, it reflects, but seldom prophesies. In the drama of this period, therefore, we get a curiously rarefied atmosphere, representing the life of a small social group, and having little to do with the evolution of national character. The detailed study of Restoration drama has recently become intensely popular, and though it involves wading through quantities of unpleasant and ineffective plays it certainly gives a wonderfully clear picture of a society almost incredibly and fantastically depraved, yet far from uncultured and exquisitely 'polite.' For our present purpose, however, no such detailed study is either necessary or desirable. Our object is first to discover in what respects the plays of this period qualified the development of English drama, and secondly to pick out the few men and works

of genius from the enormous collection of commonplace, mediocre, and worthless plays.

Though there was a certain vogue for heroic tragedy the great majority of the plays of this period were comedies, and it is the comedies that reflect the true spirit of Restoration Court life. Charles Lamb, in his well-known essay on the Restoration dramatists, asserted that they created a world which was entirely artificial, thus excusing, in some degree, their extreme coarseness in both subject and language. But a study of contemporary diaries, memoirs, and correspondence, and of the circumstances of the plays themselves, shows clearly that this was not so. Many of the characters, and sometimes the incidents too, were drawn straight from life. All stage-comedy, however realistic, employs exaggeration, and it is evident that these plays are a dramatic exaggeration, but no more, of the manners and habits of the Restoration Court circle. It was a society in which the conventional moral code had completely broken down; all virtue was regarded as hypocrisy, and unlawful love was the unchanging theme of every play. Love and sexual attraction had become entirely separate things, and relations between men and women were impossible except on a basis of artificiality. Such a state of affairs could not possibly last, and the best comedies of the period show the amused bewilderment of more thoughtful minds at the futility of such purposeless waste and licentiousness. It was a good subject for satire, and though there were many playwrights who were content to do nothing but pander to the depraved tastes of their audiences, and who aimed consistently at enlisting favour for the wrongdoer, many of the better plays (especially the later ones) have clearly a moral purpose. However much fun is made out of the sins of the people in the play, licence is shown to lead pretty surely to unhappiness.

The Court audiences, for which the 'comedy of manners' came into being, led a life that was futile, thoughtless, and

artificial, and they had no sympathy for anything outside their own experience. But these curious conditions caused a unique drama, which contained unique beauties, in spite of its faults. The faults are obvious; besides the outstanding one of indecency there is a sameness of plot, a lack of invention, a reliance on imitation rather than creation. There is no idealism or philosophy, no trace of metaphysical thought. The comedy of manners is topical in its very essence. It is based on immediate reactions, aiming at nothing universal or enduring, as did the comedy of humours, but at the peculiar vices and follies of a particular age. The one grew out of the other, and often employed its methods; witness the constantly recurring country squire and cowardly braggart. But the chief difference that we observe in drama before and after the Commonwealth is that in the later phase wit is by far the most important element, and that there is a corresponding loss of passion. Brilliant repartee and polished conversation were the main objects in life for 'persons of quality'; emotion appears hardly at all in comedy. And dazzling as this language is in the hands of a genius such as Congreve, it was no more unnatural or exaggerated than the language commonly employed in everyday life by the audiences for whom the plays were written. It was said of Sir Charles Sedley that he uttered more wit at supper than could be heard in any play. This apparently most artificial feature of all in Restoration drama was a fashion straight from life, and the same is true of its other peculiarities. The wit in the plays is uneven, and too often forced, but at its worst it is better than the quibbling of the Elizabethans; antitheses are more tolerable than puns. At its best it surpasses anything else of its kind in our language. Some of the playwrights of this period were men of culture, with a high sense of literary form, a lively appreciation of the stage, and a genius for expression. Restoration comedy, in spite of its

faults, contains much that is beautiful, stimulating, and valuable. The elegance and precision of Sedley and Rochester, the keen satire and noble rhythms of Dryden, the pathos of Otway, Wycherley's unfailing grasp of a comic situation, and Congreve's glorious prose—these alone, besides a score of lesser beauties, quite reclaim this curious and unique half-century of drama from worthlessness.

There was no actual continuity between the theatre of 1642 and the new theatre of 1660. The tradition of acting was broken, and Betterton, the most notable actor of the Restoration, went to Paris to study acting. The Court, which had been exiled in Paris during these years, had, however, become thoroughly familiar with the French stage and the French classical style of drama, and when D'Avenant opened his theatre just before the Restoration both his plays and his methods of production were direct offshoots of the French classical drama. The foreign drama, however, soon became naturalized. Dramatists certainly continued to draw upon foreign plays for ideas, plots, incidents, and even characters, but they changed them beyond recognition. Molière was utilized in this way, but he did not become famous in Paris till 1659, and probably few of the Restoration writers saw his plays; there is, on the whole, little to be found in common between them and those of the English writers. The Restoration Court is commonly supposed to have picked up its manners and tastes during its exile in Paris, but the English Court was well on the road to depravity before its exile. Not only was the English comedy much coarser than the French, but the essential feature of French comedy, its classic simplicity, was always lost, because the adapters combined and elaborated the plots they appropriated. The custom of indecent talk and incident may certainly be traced to France—such open and honest indelicacy has never been an English characteristic. The primary duty of the Restoration dramatists was to

amuse the King and his Court, so their methods were naturally French. But their matter was English. Plays of the pre-Commonwealth era began to be revived as soon as the theatres opened, and were soon in greater demand than adaptations of French plays; the tragi-comedies of Beaumont and Fletcher were especially popular. Restoration drama may be said to be the direct and natural outcome of Jacobean and Caroline drama—not of the earlier writers, such as Shakespeare, Jonson, and Fletcher, but of Massinger, Shirley, Heywood, and Ford. The increasing realism of comedy and artificiality of tragedy are all to be found in their works, and the main thesis of Restoration drama—sex-antagonism, the dislike of marriage, and all the complications that spring from this idea—was clearly becoming more and more their main thesis. Restoration drama is elementally English; its foreign characteristics are chiefly on the surface, and it is easy to exaggerate their importance.

II. Comedy. The plays of Charles D'Avenant (reputed the godson of Shakespeare) and Thomas Killigrew, who were the pioneers of the new drama, are little more than adaptations, and are chiefly remarkable for their extravagant employment of adventure and rhetoric and their insatiable fondness for the themes of love and honour. They adapted English as well as French plays, and produced a comic version of *Romeo and Juliet*. But the first dramatist of striking ability was Sir George Etherege, who has been called "the father of the comedy of manners." He became famous after his first play, *The Comical Revenge*, in 1663. Pepys said that he saw a thousand people turned away from a performance of *She Would if She Could* in 1668. His best play was his last, *The Man of Mode* (1676). Etherege completely discarded Jonson's theory of 'humours' and concentrated upon representing the 'man of quality,' who pursued pleasure without dignity or reflection. He was lax in plot, but his dialogue is always witty, often brilliant,

and never out of character. Mr Bonamy Dobrée, in his excellent book on *Restoration Comedy*, has pointed out that comedy may be of three kinds—free comedy, critical comedy, and great comedy. That of Etherege is perhaps the best type that we possess of free comedy, in which there are no values, no laws, no appeal to criticism—only frivolity. Critical comedy has a definite aim, and is intended to repress eccentricity and exaggeration; it is the Meredithian "sword of common sense." Such are the plays of Congreve, Wycherley, and Vanbrugh. Great comedy is akin to tragedy, and is not to be found in the plays of this period. It is the most difficult form of comedy. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* is a good example of it.

Sir Charles Sedley was a close follower of Etherege, but less original and brilliant, and coarser. The plays of Mrs Aphra Behn were also of this type; brutality takes the place of passion, and scurrility of wit. Such plays are of little worth unless they are transformed by the delicate touch of a writer such as Etherege.

Among the critical playwrights of the earlier years of this period William Wycherley is the most remarkable. Indelicate as his plays are, he was at heart a moralist, and he knew how to write a comedy. Many consider his *The Country Wife* (1674) the best stage-play of the period; he had a sure sense of the stage, and an unfailing eye for a comic situation. He was a friend of Alexander Pope. Thomas Shadwell was similar to him in method, and very prolific, but none of his plays will bear comparison with those of Wycherley. It is in the later group of comedy-writers that we find the comedy of manners at its best. There is much that is worthless; there is much that is readable, but not remarkable, such as the plays of Colley Cibber, and in the next century of Steele and others. But in all this mass of drama the names of Vanbrugh, Congreve, and Farquhar alone stand out in relief.

Sir John Vanbrugh was quite unliterary; his verse is like prose, and his prose like verse, and it is often difficult to tell which he is using. But his dialogue is racy and amusing. He was an unreflective, good-humoured, witty, able man of affairs, with wide interests and great ability, soldier and architect as well as dramatist. He reverted somewhat to the comedy of humours, and his plays are chiefly remarkable for his intensely amusing ridicule of types. This is best shown in *The Relapse* (1696); Sheridan rewrote this play in 1777 as *A Trip to Scarborough*, and it is better to read or act the play in Sheridan's version, which, besides being more accessible, is an improvement on Vanbrugh's in both taste and style, and a better stage-play, while it still retains the spirit of the original.

William Congreve's first play, *The Old Batchelor*, appeared in 1693. It seems to have been a remarkably fine performance, and was an instant success. Much of the dialogue in it is extravagant, and, like Vanbrugh, he relies largely on humours for his comedy. But at once we recognize a master-hand; his stagecraft is instinctive, he handles a plot with wonderful skill, and his language is something quite beyond that of his predecessors. In his next play, *The Double Dealer* (1693), we see more clearly that comedy in his hands is no mere fun, neither is it adequately described as satirical, as Wycherley's is. There is an eloquent argument behind the wit, giving an almost tragic force to his most exquisitely comic dialogue. The motive of *The Double Dealer* is almost too grave for comedy, and its classical construction adds to the impression of seriousness. *Love for Love* appeared in 1696 and *The Way of the World* in 1700. In the latter play we see the highest perfection of the comedy of manners; it has been called the "best English comedy." It is difficult to imagine anything more entirely satisfying to both brain and ear than Congreve's prose, and besides the beauty of its form it is perfect stage-dialogue,

written with the keenest feeling for the human voice, and with a melodious arrangement of vowels, consonants, and cadences that is hardly equalled outside the work of our greatest poets. Congreve learnt much from his predecessors, but wrote solely from experience; there is no dramatist whose outlook is so limited and concentrated. All his plays deal with the contemporary life of the circle in which he lived (and we must remember that he wrote thirty to forty years after the Restoration). His philosophy was based upon life as he saw it, and he was frankly uninterested in wider problems; he made no attempt to "see life steadily and see it whole." "I confess freely," he said, "that I could never look long upon a monkey without mortifying reflections." He was a person of quality, writing of persons of quality for persons of quality. Life was to him always more than art; he knew intimately all the greatest minds of his time. When his last and best comedy unaccountably failed he gave up the drama in disgust and never returned to it.

A remarkable feature of Congreve's work is his sympathetic and 'intellectual' treatment of women. No other dramatist until Mr Shaw has admitted women to such an all-round equality with men.

In 1698 Jeremy Collier published his famous *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, which was directed mainly against Vanbrugh and Congreve. It is a badly reasoned and stupid work, confusing art with life and blasphemy with immorality, and wilfully misunderstanding the playwright's motive. But it created considerable scandal. A royal proclamation was issued, Congreve was prosecuted, and Betterton and Mrs Bracegirdle were fined. It had little permanent effect, and those against whom it was directed ignored it. It is certainly possible, however, to detect an occasional increase of delicacy in some of the playwrights of the early years of Queen Anne's reign.

The most interesting of these is George Farquhar. He was a complete contrast to Congreve, being quite unliterary and unscholarly; he observed no rules, and made immoderate use of the time-worn devices of disguise and concealment. His earlier plays were mainly attempts to imitate Congreve and Vanbrugh, but in his later work, when he too wrote of life as he himself knew it, we find freshness and realism, and a new 'country' atmosphere which reminds us immediately of Heywood. His best plays are *The Recruiting Officer* (1706) and *The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707).

III. Tragedy. Like the comedy, the tragedy of the Restoration was French in form, but speedily became naturalized. The most considerable writer of tragedy in this period was John Dryden, who in spite of his distaste for dramatic work (he said that "his genius never much inclined him to the stage") wrote nearly thirty plays. Many of these were comedies, but as he considered comedy "inferior to all sorts of dramatic writing" it is not surprising that they are comparatively unsuccessful. He only really succeeded in heroic tragedy, in which he set the fashion of rimed verse; it is noticeable, however, that his best play, *All for Love* (1678), is written in blank verse. By 1680 the fashion of rime disappeared altogether.[1] In *All for Love* Dryden attempts a classical and heroic version of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*; he said that he never pleased himself so much as in writing this play, and attributed his success to the fact that he was modelling his verse on that of Shakespeare. The play is surprisingly good.

The heroic tragedy was a poor, unreal thing. It was the result of an entirely unheroic temper working upon French and Elizabethan models. Restoration writers could not even imagine the great romantic figures, like Raleigh, who

[1] It was a passing and unimportant fashion, not employed in any plays of great merit. It has therefore not been illustrated among the examples given in this chapter.

were real to the Elizabethans. Elizabethan tragedy was real life intensified; French classical tragedy had an ideal reality of its own; but the heroic tragedy of the Restoration belonged to a land of nowhere, and had no connexion, real or ideal, with living folk.[1] It was this period that saw the first attempts at opera, the most artificial and unreal of all kinds of drama, and closely akin to the heroic tragedy. Many French and Italian operas were performed; opera was Continental in origin, but some original English operas were written, and many attempts were made to adapt English plays, particularly Shakespeare's, to this form.

Most of the playwrights of this period wrote some tragedy, but the distinction between comedy and tragedy was strictly preserved. Few are successful; Congreve's one attempt, *The Mourning Bride* (1697), though it contains fine poetry, cannot be called a great play. The only remarkable tragedy-writer besides Dryden was Thomas Otway. His earlier efforts were conventional and dull, but his later plays, particularly *The Orphan* (1680) and *Venice Preserved* (1682), are written in fine rhetorical verse and contain passages of noble poetry and great dramatic possibilities, though they are uneven in both these and other respects. They are unique in our dramatic literature. His plays were very popular and had the advantage of being splendidly acted. Other tragedy-writers were Nathaniel Lee, Thomas Southerne, and Nicholas Rowe.[2]

All who were connected with the theatre were vehemently Royalist, and many political satires were written for the stage in the early years of the Restoration. These, and the rest of the vast number of lesser plays, cannot be considered

[1] The Duke of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*, a farce designed to ridicule the heroic tragedy and Dryden in particular, displays its weaknesses brilliantly. Sheridan's *The Critic* is modelled upon this play. Much can be learnt about the stage by a study of the great burlesques—*The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, *The Rehearsal*, *The Critic*, and Fielding's *Tragedy of Tragedies*.

[2] See p. 175.

here. In the plays of the first decade of the eighteenth century we notice an increasing tendency to melodrama and sentimentalism in both tragedy and comedy.

IV. Acting Conditions. In 1656 D'Avenant opened the Cockpit in Drury Lane, and several companies were started during the next few years. At the King's return D'Avenant and Killigrew were granted royal patents, and the theatre remained under the direct patronage of the King, from whom it received considerable practical assistance, such as money and costumes. During most of this period there were only two theatres, the Theatre Royal and the Duke of York's. 'Runs' were short (a week was considered an excellent run), for the public, though constant, was small; this accounts for the large proportion of rubbish that was produced. The behaviour of the audience was abominable; they talked down plays and actors that they disliked, drank, fought, made love, and generally behaved in the insolent manner that we see reflected in the plays.

The stage of the Restoration is half-way between the Elizabethan stage and that of our own times. There were three important innovations: women actors, elaborate movable scenery, and a 'picture-frame' stage. Women actors had appeared before the closing of the theatres in private performances of Jacobean masks, and at least once on the public stage,[1] but now they were generally recognized. Pepys first saw women acting in 1661. The acting at this time must have been wonderful; Betterton, Mrs Bracegirdle, Mrs Barry, and Nell Gwyn are only a few of those whose names are still remembered for performances which held even Restoration audiences spellbound. An 'apron-stage' of considerable size was still used;[2] in fact, there was really a stage both before and behind the pro-

[1] See p. 112.

[2] The 'apron-stage' was not discarded until the eighteenth century.

scenium, somewhat similar to the Elizabethan outer and inner stage. But the audience now watched most of the play from one side only, instead of from three, as in the Elizabethan theatre. Elaborate scenery and mechanical transformations and effects were used, and pieces were written which depended chiefly on spectacle. In 1667 an Italian visitor said that the English stage compared favourably in this respect with that of Italy, where the stage-machinery had for some time been most ambitious. Costume was conventional, and little attempt was made at historical accuracy; there were many curious customs, such as the feathered hat, which frustrated any such attempts. The act-drop curtain was as yet little used, scenes being changed in full view of the audience.

THE ORPHAN

Thomas Otway

(1680)

Castalio and Polydore, two brothers, are both in love with Monimia, an orphan who is their father's ward. Monimia loves Castalio, but scorns Polydore. The extract given below is a good example of the method of the more accomplished writers of heroic tragedy. The lines should be declaimed with a full appreciation of their rhythmic and rhetorical quality, and with appropriate gesture and movement, in the spirit of opera rather than of comedy. Careful attention should be paid to the constantly changing emotions of the speakers. No special scenery or properties are needed. The costume is that of the Restoration Court.

Acts I and II

Enter MONIMIA, *followed by* POLYDORE

MONIMIA. Well, my lord Polydore, I guess your business,
And read the ill-natured purpose in your eyes.

POLYDORE. If to desire you more than misers wealth,
Or dying men an hour of added life;
If softest wishes, and a heart more true
Than ever suffered yet for love disdained,
Speak an ill-nature, you accuse me justly.

MONIMIA. Talk not of love, my lord, I must not hear it.
POLYDORE. Who can behold such beauty and be silent?
Desire first taught us words. Man, when created,
At first alone, long wandered up and down,
Forlorn, and silent as his vassal beasts;
But when a heaven-born maid, like you, appeared,
Strange pleasures filled his eyes, and fired his heart,
Unloosed his tongue, and his first talk was love.
MONIMIA. The first created pair, indeed, were blest;
They were the only objects of each other,
Therefore he courted her, and her alone:
But in this peopled world of beauty, where
There's roving room, where you may court, and ruin
A thousand more, why need you talk to me?
POLYDORE. Oh! I could talk to thee for ever: [*catching her by the hands*] thus
Eternally admiring, fix and gaze
On those dear eyes; for every glance they send
Darts through my soul, and almost gives enjoyment.
MONIMIA. How can you labour thus for my undoing?
I must confess, indeed, I owe you more
Than ever I can hope to think to pay.
There always was a friendship 'twixt our families;
And therefore, when my tender parents died,
Whose ruined fortunes too expirèd with them,
Your father's pity and his bounty took me,
A poor and helpless orphan, to his care.
POLYDORE. 'Twas heaven ordained it so, to make me happy.
Hence with this peevish virtue! 'Tis a cheat;
And those who taught it first were hypocrites.
[*Attempting to embrace her*] Come, these soft tender limbs were made for yielding.
MONIMIA [*kneeling*]. Here on my knees, by heaven's blest power I swear,
If you persist, I ne'er henceforth will see you,
But rather wander through the world a beggar,
And live on sordid scraps at proud men's doors.
For, though to fortune lost, I'll still inherit
My mother's virtues, and my father's honour.

POLYDORE. Intolerable vanity! Your sex
Was never in the right; you're always false,
Or silly; even your dresses are not more
Fantastic than your appetites; you think
Of nothing twice; opinion you have none:
To-day you're nice, to-morrow not so free;
Now smile, then frown; now sorrowful, then glad;
Now pleased, now not; and all you know not why.
Virtue you affect, inconstancy's your practice;
Every rank fool goes down——
MONIMIA [*rising*]. Indeed, my lord,
I own my sex's follies; I've them all,
And, to avoid its fault, must fly from you.
Therefore, believe me, could you raise me high
As most fantastic woman's wish could reach,
I'd rather run a savage in the woods
Amongst brute beasts, grow wrinkled and deformed,
As wildness and most rude neglect could make me,
So I might still enjoy my honour safe
From the destroying wiles of faithless men. [*Exit.*
POLYDORE. Who'd be that sordid foolish thing called man,
To cringe thus, fawn, and flatter for a pleasure,
Which beasts enjoy so very much above him?
The lusty bull ranges through all the field,
And from the herd singles his female out.
It shall be so—I'll yet possess my love,
Wait on, and watch her loose unguarded hours;
Then, when her roving thoughts have been abroad,
And brought in wanton wishes to her heart,
In the very minute when her virtue nods
I'll rush upon her in a storm of love,
Beat down her guard of honour all before me.
Then by long absence liberty regain,
And quite forget the pleasure and the pain. [*Exit* POLYDORE.

Enter CASTALIO

CASTALIO. Monimia, Monimia!—She's gone;
And seemed to part with anger in her eyes.
She uses me already like a slave
Fast bound in chains, to be chastised at will.

Enter MONIMIA, *as if to pass over the stage*

Monimia, my angel, 'twas not kind
To leave me like a turtle here alone,
To droop and mourn the absence of my mate.
When thou art from me, every place is desert,
And I, methinks, am savage and forlorn.
Thy presence only 'tis can make me blest;
Heal my unquiet mind, and tune my soul.

MONIMIA. Oh, the bewitching tongues of faithless men!
'Tis thus the false hyena makes her moan,
To draw the pitying traveller to her den;
Your sex are so, such false dissemblers all,
And all that pity you are made your prey.

CASTALIO. What means my love? Oh, how have I deserved
This language from the sovereign of my joys!
Stop, stop those tears, Monimia: for they fall
Like baneful dew from a distempered sky;
I feel them chill me to the very heart.

MONIMIA. Oh, you are false, Castalio, most forlorn:
Attempt no farther to delude my faith;
My heart is fixed, and you shall shake't no more.

CASTALIO. Who told you so? What hell-bred villain durst
Profane the sacred business of my love?

MONIMIA. Your brother, knowing on what terms I'm here,
The unhappy object of your father's charity,
Licentiously discoursed to me of love,
And durst affront me with his brutal passion.

CASTALIO. 'Tis I have been to blame, and only I;
False to my brother, and unjust to thee!
For, oh, he loves thee too, and this day owned it,
Taxed me with mine, and claimed a right above me.
I, knowing him precipitate and rash,
Seemed to comply with his unruly will;
Talked as he talked, and granted all he asked:
Lest he in rage might have our loves betrayed,
And I for ever had Monimia lost.

MONIMIA. Could you then? Did you? Can you own it too?
'Twas poorly done, unworthy of yourself,
And I can never think you meant me fair.

CASTALIO. Is this Monimia? Surely no! Till now

I ever thought her dovelike, soft, and kind.
Who trusts his heart with woman's surely lost.
MONIMIA. When love ill-placed would find a means to break—
CASTALIO. It never wants pretences, or excuse.
MONIMIA. Man therefore was a lord-like creature made,
Rough as the winds, and as inconstant too;
A lofty aspect given him for command,
Easily softened, when he would betray.
Like conquering tyrants you our breasts invade,
Where you are pleased to forage for a while;
But soon you find new conquests out, and leave
The ravaged province ruinate and waste.
If so, Castalio, you have served my heart,
I find that desolation's settled there,
And I shall ne'er recover peace again.
CASTALIO. Who can hear this, and bear an equal mind?
Since you will drive me from you, I must go.
No tongue my pleasure nor my pain can tell;
'Tis heaven to have thee, and without thee hell!
MONIMIA [*embracing him*]. Castalio, stay! We must not part.
I find
My rage ebbs out, and love flows in apace.
These little quarrels love must needs forgive;
They rouse up drowsy thoughts, and wake the soul.
Oh, charm me with the music of thy tongue!
I'm ne'er so blest as when I hear thy vows,
And listen to the language of thy heart.
CASTALIO. Where am I? Surely paradise is round me!
Sweets planted by the hand of heaven grow here,
And every sense is full of thy perfection.
To hear thee speak might calm a madman's frenzy,
Till by attention he forgot his sorrows;
But to behold thy eyes, thy amazing beauties,
Might make him rage again with love, as I do.
Thou nature's whole perfection in one piece!
Sure, framing thee heaven took unusual care;
As its own beauty it designed thee fair,
And formed thee by the best-loved angel there. [*Exeunt.*

THE RELAPSE

Sir John Vanbrugh

(1696)

The following extract is taken from Vanbrugh's own version, but if it is desired to read the whole play it is better to read Sheridan's arrangement, *A Trip to Scarborough* (1777) (see p. 148).

Loveless and his wife Amanda have newly moved into their London house. They are visited first by Amanda's cousin Berinthia, and then by a newly created peer, Lord Foppington, recently Sir Novelty Fashion. It is all in the nature of burlesque, and there are many opportunities for 'business,' such as elaborate bows, snuff-taking, etc., of which the utmost advantage should be taken. The scene is a London interior, plainly furnished, as far as possible in seventeenth-century style. Costumes of the Restoration period. All should be finely, and Lord Foppington exquisitely, dressed. The doctor should wear black.

Act II, Scene 1

LOVELESS *and* AMANDA *are discovered.*

LOVELESS. How do you like these lodgings, my dear? For my part, I am so well pleased with them, I shall hardly remove whilst we stay in town, if you are satisfied.

AMANDA. I am satisfied with everything that pleases you. But the prospect of our return will be my chiefest entertainment, whilst, much against my will, I am obliged to stand surrounded with these empty pleasures, which 'tis so much the fashion to be fond of.

LOVELESS. I own most of them are indeed but empty. Yet some there are we may speak kindlier of: the conversation of the town is one; and truly (with some small allowances) the plays, I think, may be esteemed another. Doubtless the moral of a well-wrought scene is of prevailing force—last night there happened one that moved me strangely.

AMANDA. Pray, what was that?

LOVELESS. Why, 'twas about—but 'tis not worth repeating.

AMANDA. Yes, pray let me know it.

LOVELESS. 'Twas a foolish thing. You'd perhaps grow jealous should I tell it you, though without a cause, heaven knows.

AMANDA. I shall begin to think I have cause, if you persist in making it a secret.

LOVELESS. I'll then convince you you have none, by making it no longer so. Know then, I happened in the play to find my very

character, only with the addition of a relapse; which struck me so, I put a sudden stop to a most harmless entertainment, which till then diverted me between the acts. 'Twas to admire the workmanship of nature, in the face of a young lady that sat some distance from me; she was so exquisitely handsome——

AMANDA. So exquisitely handsome!

LOVELESS. Why do you repeat my words, my dear?

AMANDA. Because you seemed to speak them with such pleasure, I thought I might oblige you with their echo.

LOVELESS. Then you are alarmed, Amanda?

AMANDA. It is my duty to be so, when you are in danger.

LOVELESS. You are too quick in apprehending for me. For, observing in the play that he who seemed to represent me there was, by an accident like this, unwarily surprised into a net, in which he lay a poor entangled slave, I snatched my eyes away; they pleaded hard for leave to look again, but I grew absolute, and they obeyed.

AMANDA. Were they the only things that were inquisitive? Had I been in your place, my tongue, I fancy, had been curious too. I should have asked her where she lived—yet still without design. Who was she, pray?

LOVELESS. Indeed, I cannot tell.

AMANDA. You will not tell.

LOVELESS. By all that's sacred, then, I did not ask.

AMANDA. Then I am calm again.

LOVELESS. Why, were you disturbed? You had no cause.

AMANDA. I thought I had. But I shan't put you to the trouble of further excuses; if you please, this business shall rest here. Only give me leave to wish, for your peace and mine, that you may never meet this miracle of beauty more.

LOVELESS. I am content.

Enter SERVANT

SERVANT. Madam, there's a young lady at the door in a chair desires to know whether your ladyship sees company. I think her name is Berinthia.

AMANDA. Oh, dear! 'Tis a relation I have not seen these five years. Pray her to walk in. [*Exit* SERVANT.] Here's another beauty for you. She was young when I saw her last; but I hear she's grown extremely handsome.

LOVELESS. Don't you be jealous, now, for I shall gaze upon her too.

Enter BERINTHIA

[*Aside*] Ha! By heavens, the very woman!

BERINTHIA [*kissing* AMANDA]. Dear Amanda, I did not expect to meet with you in town.

AMANDA. Sweet cousin, I'm overjoyed to see you. Mr Loveless, here's a relation and friend of mine I desire you'll be better acquainted with.

LOVELESS [*kissing* BERINTHIA's *hand*]. If my wife never desires a harder thing, madam, her request will be easily granted.

BERINTHIA [*to* AMANDA]. I think, madam, I ought to wish you joy upon your marriage.

LOVELESS. You ought rather, madam, to wish me joy upon that, since I am the only gainer.

BERINTHIA. Sir, the world is so just to you both, to own you are, and deserve to be, the happiest pair that live in it.

LOVELESS. I am afraid we shall lose that character, madam, whenever you happen to change your condition.

Enter SERVANT

SERVANT. Sir, my Lord Foppington presents his humble service to you, and desires to know how you do. He but just now heard you were in town. He's at the next door, and if it be not inconvenient, he'll come and wait upon you.

LOVELESS. Lord Foppington! I know him not.

BERINTHIA. Not his dignity, perhaps, but you do his person. 'Tis Sir Novelty Fashion; he has bought a barony, in order to marry a great fortune.

LOVELESS. Give my service to his lordship, and let him know, I am proud of the honour he intends me. [*Exit* SERVANT.] Sure this addition of quality must have so improved this coxcomb, he can't but be very good company for a quarter of an hour.

AMANDA. Now it moves my pity more than my mirth, to see a man whom Nature has made no fool be so very industrious to pass for an ass.

LOVELESS. No, there you are wrong, Amanda; you should never bestow your pity upon those who take pains for your contempt; pity those whom Nature abuses, but never those who abuse Nature.

BERINTHIA. Besides, the town would be robbed of one of its chiefest diversions, if it should become a crime to laugh at a fool.

Enter LORD FOPPINGTON. *He postures and poses in a most extravagant manner*

FOPPINGTON. Sir, I am your most humble servant.

LOVELESS. I wish you joy, my lord.

FOPPINGTON. Oh, Lard, sir—madam, your ladyship's welcome to tawn.

AMANDA. I wish your lordship joy.

FOPPINGTON. Oh, heavens, madam——

LOVELESS. My lord, this young lady is a relation of my wife's.

FOPPINGTON [*kissing* BERINTHIA's *hand*]. The beautifullest race of people upon earth, rat me. Dear Loveless, I am overjoyed to see you have brought your family to tawn again; I am, stap my vitals—[*aside*] for I design to make love to your wife. [*To* AMANDA] For Gad's sake, madam, haw has your ladyship been able to subsist thus long, under the fatigue of a country life?

AMANDA. My life has been very far from that, my lord; it has been a very quiet one.

FOPPINGTON. Why, that's the fatigue I speak of, madam: for 'tis impossible to be quiet, without thinking. Now thinking is to me the greatest fatigue in the world.

AMANDA. Does not your lordship love reading, then?

FOPPINGTON. Oh, passionately, madam—but I never think on what I read.

AMANDA. Well, I must own I think books the best entertainment in the world.

FOPPINGTON. I am so much of your ladyship's mind, madam, that I have a private gallery, where I walk sometimes, is furnished with nothing but books and looking-glasses. Madam, I have gilded them, and ranged 'em, so prettily, before Gad, it is the most entertaining thing in the world to walk and look upon 'em.

AMANDA. Nay, I love a neat library too; but 'tis, I think, the inside of a book should recommend it most to us.

FOPPINGTON. That, I must confess, I am not altogether so fand of. Far to my mind the inside of a book is to entertain oneself with the product of another man's brain. Naw, I think a man of quality and breeding may be much diverted with the natural sprauts of his own. For example, madam, my life; my life, madam, is a perpetual stream of pleasure, that glides through such a variety of entertainments, I believe the wisest of our ancestors never had the least conception of any of 'em. I rise, madam,

about ten o'clock. I don't rise sooner, because 'tis the worst thing in the world for the complection ; nat that I pretend to be a beau ; but a man must endeavour to look wholesome, lest he make so nauseous a figure in the side-bax, the ladies should be compelled to turn their eyes upon the play. So at ten o'clock, I say, I rise. Naw, if I find it a good day, I resolve to take a turn in the Park, and see the fine women ; so huddle on my clothes, and get dressed by one. If it be nasty weather, I take a turn in the chocolate-house ; where, as you walk, madam, you have the prettiest prospect in the world ; you have looking-glasses all round you—But I'm afraid I tire the company.

BERINTHIA. Not at all. Pray, go on.

FOPPINGTON. Why, then, ladies, from thence I go to dinner at Lacket's, and there you are so nicely and delicately served, that, stap my vitals, they can compose you a dish, no bigger than a saucer, shall come to fifty shillings ; between eating my dinner, and washing my mouth, ladies, I spend my time, till I go to the play ; where, till nine o'clock I entertain myself with looking upon the company ; and usually dispose of one hour more in leading them aut. So there's twelve of the four-and-twenty pretty well over. The other twelve, madam, are disposed of in two articles : in the first four I toast myself drunk, and in t'other eight I sleep myself sober again. Thus, ladies, you see my life is an eternal raund O of delights.

LOVELESS. 'Tis a heavenly one, indeed.

AMANDA. But, my lord, you beaux spend a great deal of your time in intrigues : you have given us no account of them yet.

FOPPINGTON [*aside*]. So, she would enquire into my amours—that's jealousy—she begins to be in love with me. [*To* AMANDA] Why, madam, as to time for my intrigues, I usually make detachments of it from my other pleasures, according to the exigency. Far your ladyship may please to take notice that those who intrigue with women of quality, have rarely occasion for above half an hour at a time. So that the course of my other pleasures is not very much interrupted by my amours.

BERINTHIA. Pray, which church does your lordship most oblige with your presence?

FOPPINGTON. Oh, St James's, madam—there's much the best company. [*To* AMANDA] Mayn't we hope for the honour to see your ladyship added to our society, madam?

AMANDA. Alas, my lord, I am the worst company in the world at church: I'm apt to mind the prayers, or the sermon, or——

FOPPINGTON. One is indeed strangely apt at church to mind what one should not do. But I hope, madam, at one time or other, I shall have the honour to lead your ladyship to your coach there. [*Aside*] Methinks she seems strangely pleased with everything I say to her—'tis a vast pleasure to receive encouragement from a woman before her husband's face—I have a good mind to pursue my conquest, and speak the thing plainly to her at once—I' Gad, I'll do it! Ladies, I'll take my leave; I'm afraid I begin to grow troublesome with the length of my visit.

AMANDA. Your lordship is too entertaining to grow troublesome anywhere.

FOPPINGTON [*aside*]. That, now, was as much as an invitation. I'll let her see I'm quick of apprehension. [*To* AMANDA] Oh, Lard, madam, I had like to have forgot a secret, I must needs tell your ladyship. [*To* LOVELESS] Ned, you must not be so jealous now as to listen.

LOVELESS. Not I, my lord; I'm too fashionable a husband to pry into the secrets of my wife.

FOPPINGTON [*to* AMANDA, *squeezing her hand*]. I am in love with you to desperation, strike me speechless.

AMANDA [*boxing his ear*]. Then thus I return your passion—an impudent fool!

FOPPINGTON. Gad's curse, madam, I'm a peer of the realm!

LOVELESS. Hey, what the devil, do you affront my wife, sir? Nay then——

[*They draw and fight. The women run shrieking for help.*

FOPPINGTON [*falling back, and leaning upon his sword*]. Ah—quite through the body—stap my vitals.

Enter SERVANTS

LOVELESS [*running to him*]. I hope I ha'n't killed the fool, however—bear him up! Where's your wound?

FOPPINGTON. Just through the guts.

LOVELESS. Call a surgeon there: unbutton him quickly.

FOPPINGTON. Ay, pray make haste. [*Exit* SERVANT.

LOVELESS. This mischief you may thank yourself for.

FOPPINGTON. I may so—love's the devil indeed, Ned.

Enter SYRINGE *and* SERVANT

SERVANT. Here's Mr Syringe, sir, was just going by the door.

FOPPINGTON. He's the welcomest man alive.

SYRINGE. Stand by, stand by, stand by. Pray, gentlemen, stand by. Did you never see a man run through the body before? Pray stand by.

FOPPINGTON. Ah, Mr Syringe—I'm a dead man.

SYRINGE. A dead man, and I by? I should laugh to see that, egad.

LOVELESS. Prythee, don't stand prating, but look upon his wound.

SYRINGE [*folding his arms*]. Why, what if I won't look upon his wound this hour, sir?

LOVELESS. Why, then he'll bleed to death, sir.

SYRINGE. Why, then, I'll fetch him to life again, sir.

LOVELESS. 'Slife, he's run through the guts, I tell thee.

SYRINGE. Would he were run through the heart: I should get the more credit by his cure. Come, now let me come at him: now let me come at him. [*Viewing his wound*] Oons, what a gash is here!—Why, sir, a man may drive a coach and six horses into your body.

FOPPINGTON. Oh——

SYRINGE. Why, what the devil, have you run the gentleman through with a scythe? [*Aside*] A little prick between the skin and the ribs, that's all.

LOVELESS. Let me see his wound.

SYRINGE. Then you shall dress it, sir; for if anybody looks upon it, I won't.

LOVELESS. Why, thou art the veriest coxcomb I ever saw.

SYRINGE. Sir, I am not master of my trade for nothing.

FOPPINGTON. Surgeon!

SYRINGE. Well, sir?

FOPPINGTON. Is there any hopes?

SYRINGE. Hopes! I can't tell. What are you willing to pay for your cure?

FOPPINGTON. Five hundred paunds with pleasure.

SYRINGE. Why, then perhaps there may be hopes. But we must avoid further delay. Here, help the gentleman into a chair, and carry him to my house presently, that's the properest place—[*aside*] to bubble him out of his money. Come, a chair, quickly. [*They bring in a sedan chair.*] There, in with him.

FOPPINGTON. Dear Loveless, adieu. If I die—I forgive thee; and if I live, I hope thou wilt do as much by me. I am very sorry you and I should quarrel; but I hope here's an end of it, for if you are satisfied—I am.

LOVELESS. I shall hardly think it worth my prosecuting any further, so you may be at rest, sir.

FOPPINGTON. Thou art a generous fellow, strike me dumb. [*Aside*] But thou hast an impertinent wife, stap my vitals.

SYRINGE. So, carry him off, carry him off; we shall have him prate himself into a fever by and by: carry him off.

[*They carry him off.*

THE WAY OF THE WORLD

WILLIAM CONGREVE

(1700)

Mirabell is in love with Mistress Millamant, and though she returns his affection, they are both persons of quality, and their love-making takes the form of matching their wits in exquisitely delicate raillery, beneath which passion, always present, is only now and then discernible.

Mirabell is talking to Mistress Fainall, and Mistress Millamant comes in with her maid, Mincing, and Witwoud, a would-be wit, who is one of her admirers. The scene is in St James's Park, but no scenery or properties are necessary. Restoration Court costumes.

ACT II

MIRABELL. Here she comes, i'faith, full sail, with her fan spread, and her streamers out, and a shoal of fools for tenders. Ha, no, I cry her mercy!

FAINALL. I see but one poor empty sculler, and he tows her woman after him.

MIRABELL [*to* MILLAMANT]. You seem to be unattended, madam. —You used to have the *beau-monde* throng after you; and a flock of gay fine perukes hovering round you.

WITWOUD. Like moths about a candle.—I had like to have lost my comparison for want of breath.

MILLAMANT. Oh, I have denied myself airs to-day. I have walked as fast through the crowd——

WITWOUD. As a favourite in disgrace; and with as few followers.

MILLAMANT. Dear Mr Witwoud, truce with your similitudes: for I am as sick of 'em——

WITWOUD. As a physician of a good air.—I cannot help it, madam, though 'tis against myself.

MILLAMANT. Yet again! Mincing, stand between me and his wit.

WITWOUD. Do, Mrs Mincing, like a screen before a great fire. —I confess I do blaze to-day, I am too bright.

FAINALL. But, dear Millamant, why were you so long?

MILLAMANT. Long! Lord, have I not made violent haste? I have asked every living thing I met for you; I have enquired after you, as after a new fashion.

WITWOUD. Madam, truce with your similitudes.

FAINALL. You were dressed before I came abroad.

MILLAMANT. Ay, that's true—oh, but then I had—Mincing, what had I? Why was I so long?

MINCING. Oh, mem, your la'ship stayed to peruse a packet of letters.

MILLAMANT. Oh, ay, letters—I had letters—I am persecuted with letters—I hate letters—nobody knows how to write letters, and yet one has 'em, one does not know why. They serve to pin up one's hair.

WITWOUD. Is that the way? Pray, madam, do you pin up your hair with all your letters? I find I must keep copies.

MILLAMANT. Only with those in verse, Mr Witwoud. I never pin up my hair with prose. I think I tried once, Mincing.

MINCING. Oh, mem, I shall never forget it.

MILLAMANT. Ay, poor Mincing tift and tift all the morning.

MINCING. Till I had the cramp in my fingers, I'll vow, mem. And all to no purpose. But when your la'ship pins it up with poetry, it sits so pleasant the next day as anything, and is so pure, and so crips.

WITWOUD [*sarcastically*]. Indeed, so "crips"?

MINCING. You're such a critic, Mr Witwoud.

MILLAMANT. Mirabell, did you take exceptions last night? Oh, ay, and went away—Now I think on't I'm angry—no, now I think on't I'm pleased—for I believe I gave you some pain.

MIRABELL. Does that please you?

MILLAMANT. Infinitely; I love to give pain.

MIRABELL. You would affect a cruelty which is not in your nature; your true vanity is the power of pleasing.

MILLAMANT. Oh, I ask your pardon for that—one's cruelty is one's power, and when one parts with one's cruelty, one parts with one's power; and when one has parted with that, I fancy one's old and ugly.

MIRABELL. Ay, ay, suffer your cruelty to ruin the object of your power, to destroy your lover—and then how vain, how lost a thing you'll be! Nay, 'tis true: you are no longer handsome when you've lost your lover; your beauty dies upon the instant. For beauty is the lover's gift; 'tis he bestows your charms—your glass is all a cheat.

MILLAMANT. Oh, the vanity of these men! Fainall, d'ye hear him? If they did not commend us, we were not handsome! Now you must know they could not commend one if one was not handsome. Beauty the lover's gift—Lord, what is a lover, that it can give? Why, one makes lovers as fast as one pleases, and they live as long as one pleases, and they die as soon as one pleases: and then if one pleases one makes more.

WITWOUD. Very pretty. Why, you make no more of making lovers, madam, than of making so many card-matches.

MILLAMANT. One no more owes one's beauty to a lover, than one's wit to an echo: they can but reflect what we look and say; vain empty things if we are silent or unseen, and want a being.

MIRABELL. Yet to these two vain empty things, you owe the two greatest pleasures of your life.

MILLAMANT. How so?

MIRABELL. To your lover you owe the pleasure of hearing yourselves praised; and to an echo the pleasure of hearing yourselves talk.

WITWOUD. But I know a lady that talks so incessantly, she won't give an echo fair play; she has that everlasting rotation of the tongue, that an echo must wait till she dies, before it can catch her last words.

MILLAMANT. Oh, fiction! Fainall, let us leave these men.

MIRABELL [*aside to* FAINALL]. Draw off Witwoud.

FAINALL. Immediately. I have a word or two for Mr Witwoud.

[*Exeunt* WITWOUD *and* FAINALL. MINCING *withdraws discreetly up-stage.*

MIRABELL. I would beg a little private audience too; you had the tyranny to deny me last night.

MILLAMANT. I please myself;—besides, sometimes to converse with fools is for my health.

MIRABELL. Your health! Is there a worse disease than the conversation of fools?

MILLAMANT. Mirabell, if you persist in this offensive freedom, you'll displease me. I think I must resolve, after all, not to have you:—we shan't agree.

MIRABELL. Not in our physic, it may be.

MILLAMANT. And yet our distemper, in all likelihood, will be the same; for we shall be sick of one another. I shan't endure to be reprimanded, nor instructed; 'tis so dull to act always by advice, and so tedious to be told of one's faults—I can't bear it. Well, I won't have you, Mirabell—I'm resolved—I think—you may go—ha, ha, ha! What would you give, that you could help loving me?

MIRABELL. I would give something that you did not know I could not help it.

MILLAMANT. Come, don't look grave then. Well, what do you say to me?

MIRABELL. I say that a man may as soon make a friend by his wit, or a fortune by his honesty, as win a woman by plain dealing and sincerity.

MILLAMANT. Sententious Mirabell!—Prithee, don't look with that violent and inflexible wise face, like Solomon at the dividing of the child in an old tapestry hanging.

MIRABELL. You are merry, madam, but I would persuade you for a moment to be serious.

MILLAMANT. What, with that face? No, if you keep your countenance, 'tis impossible I should hold mine. Well, after all, there is something very moving in a love-sick face. Ha, ha, ha!—well, I won't laugh, don't be peevish. Heigho! Now I'll be melancholy, as melancholy as a watch-light. Well, Mirabell, if ever you will win me, woo me now.—Nay, if you are so tedious, fare you well; I see Fainall is coming. [*Re-enter* FAINALL.] Fainall, what shall I do? Shall I have him? I think I must have him.

FAINALL. Ay, ay, take him, take him, what should you do?

MILLAMANT. Well, then—I'll take my death I'm in a horrid fright—Fainall, I shall never say it—Well—I think—I'll endure you.

FAINALL. Fy! fy! Have him, have him, and tell him so in plain terms: for I am sure you have a mind to him.

MILLAMANT. Are you? I think I have—and the horrid man looks as if he thought so too. Well, you ridiculous thing you, I'll have you—I won't be kissed, nor I won't be thanked—Here, kiss my hand though—so, hold your tongue now, don't say a word.

MIRABELL. I am all obedience.

Lady Wishfort, Millamant's aunt, is a vain old lady, who has sent her maid, Foible, with a message to a certain Sir Rowland, Mirabell's wealthy uncle, whom she designs to marry. Mirabell has disguised his servant as Sir Rowland, and has bribed Foible to assist in the deception. The scene is in Lady Wishfort's house. A dressing-table, chair, and settee (if possible in seventeenth-century style) are all that are necessary. Lady Wishfort is at her toilet, her maid Peg waiting on her.

Acts III and IV

LADY WISHFORT. Merciful! No news of Foible yet?

PEG. No, madam.

LADY WISHFORT. I have no more patience.—If I have not fretted myself till I am pale again, there's no veracity in me. Fetch me the red—the red, do you hear, sweetheart? [*Looking at herself in the glass*] An arrant ash colour, as I am a person! Look you how this wench stirs! Why dost thou not fetch a little red? Didst thou not hear me, Mopus?

PEG. The red ratafia does your ladyship mean, or the cherry brandy?

LADY WISHFORT. Ratafia, fool? No, fool. Not the ratafia, fool—Grant me patience! I mean the Spanish paper, idiot—complexion, darling! Paint, paint, paint, dost thou understand that, changeling, dangling thy hands like bobbins before thee? Why dost thou not stir, puppet? Thou wooden thing upon wires!

PEG. Lord, madam, your ladyship is so impatient—I can't come at the paint, madam; Mrs Foible has locked it up, and taken the key with her.

LADY WISHFORT. A pox take you both. Fetch me the cherry brandy, then. [*Exit* PEG.] I'm as pale, and as faint, I look like Mrs Qualmsick, the curate's wife. Wench, come, come, wench, what art thou doing, sipping? Tasting? Save thee, dost thou not know the bottle?

Re-enter PEG, *with a bottle and a tiny china cup*

PEG. Madam, I was looking for a cup.

LADY WISHFORT. A cup, save thee! And what a cup hast thou brought! Dost thou take me for a fairy, to drink out of an acorn? Why didst thou not bring thy thimble? Come, fill, fill. [*She drinks.*] So—again. [*A knocking.*] See who that is. Set down the bottle first. Here, here, under the table—What, wouldst thou go with the bottle in thy hand like a tapster? As I'm a person, this wench has lived in an inn upon the road, before she came to me. [PEG *lets in* FOIBLE *and goes out.*] Oh, Foible, where hast thou been? What hast thou been doing?

FOIBLE. Madam, I have seen the party. A man so enamoured —so transported! Well, if worshipping of pictures be a sin—poor Sir Rowland, I say.

LADY WISHFORT. The miniature has been counted like. But thou hast not betrayed me, Foible? Hast thou not detected me to that faithless Mirabell? What hadst thou to do with him in the park?

FOIBLE. Alas, madam, could I help it if I met that confident thing? If you had heard how he used me, and all upon your ladyship's account, I'm sure you would not suspect my fidelity. I could not hold; i' faith, I gave him his own.

LADY WISHFORT. What did the filthy fellow say?

FOIBLE. Oh, madam! 'Tis a shame to say what he said—with his taunts and his fleers, tossing up his nose. Humph! (says he), what, you are hatching some plot (says he), you are so early abroad, or ferreting (says he) for some disbanded officer, I warrant.—Half-pay is but their subsistence (says he); well, what pension does your ladyship propose? Let me see (says he), she must come down pretty deep now, she's superannuated (says he), and——

LADY WISHFORT. Odds my life, I'll have him—I'll have him murdered, I'll have him poisoned! Where does he eat?

FOIBLE. Poison him? Poisoning's too good for him. Starve him, madam, starve him; marry Sir Rowland, and get him disinherited. You would bless yourself to hear what he said!

LADY WISHFORT. A villain! Superannuated!

FOIBLE. Humph (says he), I hear you are laying designs against me too (says he), and Mrs Millamant is to marry my uncle (he does not suspect a word of your ladyship); but (says he) I'll fit you

for that, I warrant you (says he), you and your old frippery too (says he)——

LADY WISHFORT. Audacious villain! Frippery! Old frippery! Was there ever such a foul-mouthed fellow? I'll be married to-morrow, I'll be contracted to-night.

FOIBLE. The sooner the better, madam.

LADY WISHFORT. Frippery! Superannuated frippery! I'll frippery the villain! He has put me out of all patience. I shall never recompose my features to receive Sir Rowland with any economy of face. This wretch has fretted me that I am absolutely decayed. Look, Foible.

FOIBLE. Your ladyship has frowned a little too rashly, indeed, madam. There are some cracks discernible in the white varnish.

LADY WISHFORT. Let me see the glass—Cracks, sayest thou? Why, I am arrantly flayed! I look like an old peeled wall. Thou must repair me, Foible, before Sir Rowland comes; or I shall never keep up to my picture.

FOIBLE. I warrant you, madam; a little art once made your picture like you; and now a little of the same art must make you like your picture. Your picture must sit for you, madam.

LADY WISHFORT. But art thou sure Sir Rowland will not fail to come? Or will he not fail when he does come? Will he be importunate, Foible, and push? For if he should not be importunate, I shall never break decorums—I shall die with confusion, if I am forced to advance—Oh no, I can never advance!—I shall swoon if he should expect advances. No, I hope Sir Rowland is better bred than to put a lady to the necessity of breaking her forms. I won't be too coy, neither. I won't give him despair—but a little disdain is not amiss; a little scorn is alluring.

FOIBLE. A little scorn becomes your ladyship.

LADY WISHFORT. Yes, but tenderness becomes me best—a sort of dyingness—You see that picture has a sort of a—ha, Foible? A swimmingness in the eye—yes, I'll look so—my niece affects it; but she wants features. Let my toilet be removed—I'll dress above. I'll receive Sir Rowland here. Are things in order, Foible? Have you perfumed the coachman and postilion, that they may not stink of the stable when Sir Rowland comes by?

FOIBLE. Yes, madam.

LADY WISHFORT. And are the dancers and the music ready, that

he may be entertained in all points with correspondence to his passion?

FOIBLE. All is ready, madam.

LADY WISHFORT. And how shall I receive him? In what figure shall I give his heart the first impression? There is a great deal in the first impression. Shall I sit? No, I won't sit—I'll walk—ay, I'll walk from the door upon his entrance; and then turn full upon him. (*All this is accompanied by action.*) No, that will be too sudden. I'll lie—ay, I'll lie down—I'll receive him in my little dressing-room, there's a couch—yes, yes, I'll give the first impression on a couch—I won't lie neither, but loll and lean upon one elbow: with one foot a little dangling off, jogging in a thoughtful way—yes—and then as soon as he appears, start, ay, start and be surprised, and rise up to meet him in a pretty disorder—yes. Oh, nothing is more alluring than a levee from a couch in some confusion—it shows the foot to advantage, and furnishes with blushes, and recomposing airs beyond comparison. Let my toilet be removed. Is Sir Rowland handsome? Don't answer me. I won't know. I'll be surprised, I'll be taken by surprise.

FOIBLE. By storm, madam. Sir Rowland's a brisk man.

LADY WISHFORT. Is he? Oh, then he'll importune, if he's a brisk man. I shall save decorums if Sir Rowland importunes. I have a mortal terror at the apprehension of offending against decorums. Oh, I'm glad he's a brisk man. Let my things be removed, good Foible. [*Exeunt.*

The following plays are recommended for study. All except *The Rehearsal* are to be found in the "Mermaid" edition of "The Best Plays of the Old Dramatists."

	Comedies	*Tragedies*
DRYDEN		*All for Love* (1678)
BUCKINGHAM	*The Rehearsal* (1671)	
OTWAY		*The Orphan* (1680)
		Venice Preserved (1682)
VANBRUGH	*The Relapse* (1696)[1]	
CONGREVE	*The Old Batchelor* (1693)	
	The Double Dealer (1693)	
	The Way of the World (1700)	
FARQUHAR	*The Beaux' Stratagem* (1707)	

[1] See p. 148.

CHAPTER VI

DRAMA OF THE EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURIES

I. The Sentimental Play.[1] In the dramatic world the reign of Queen Anne was a period of criticism and transition. Dryden died and Congreve retired in 1700, and there were no playwrights of real ability in the early years of the eighteenth century except Vanbrugh and Farquhar, whose work we have already noticed, and who both wrote nothing after the year 1717. They, and Mrs Centlivre and a few others, continued to write in the coarse manner of the Restoration, but the fashion of indelicacy was rapidly passing, helped by a succession of attacks similar to that of Collier. The first thing that we notice about the new writers is their avowedly moral intent, and the second is their extreme sentimentality. Wit disappears, and the faults of the heroic tragedy appear, without its merits, in the sentimental play—sometimes comedy, sometimes

[1] The term 'sentimental' is used frequently in this book, and as it is a word about which much misunderstanding exists it is as well to state clearly what is meant by it here. It is desirable to discriminate between 'sentiment' and 'sentimentality.' Sentiment is wholly admirable if it be taken to mean 'feeling'—that part of human perception that is not included in purely intellectual judgment. All good plays contain sentiment. Sentimentality, or false sentiment, is far less valuable, though it may be delightful in the hands of a writer such as Charles Lamb. But no two people are likely to agree as to what is false feeling and what is true. Sentimentality has been described as the term that a man applies to the expression of a sentiment that he dislikes. It has been more truly said that feeling degenerates into sentimentality when it is separated from reason and experience. In that sense the word is used in this book.

tragedy. This most depressing form of entertainment held the stage for over a hundred years, in spite of the brilliant comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan, the only great dramatists of the century, which were written with the hope of driving it from the theatre, and in spite of the more directly satirical burlesques of Fielding and others.

The sentimental plays of the eighteenth century need not detain us long; though they were numerous and popular there is not a masterpiece among them. The most interesting is *The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell*, a domestic tragedy written in 1731 by George Lillo. Lillo's work is not of a high order, judged by either literary or dramatic standards, but it is of great historical importance, for it exercised an influence over the drama not only of this country, but of the whole of Europe. Lillo was responsible for three far-reaching innovations, the importance of which he emphasized in his prefaces and illustrated to the best of his ability in his plays. First, he insisted on the use of prose for tragedy and comedy alike (his plays can be called neither—they are really melodrama), and he, more than anyone else, established prose as the recognized medium for plays of all kinds. Secondly, he pointed out the tremendous moral power of the drama, which, he said, should strive consciously to improve, by showing the just rewards of vice, amusement being of little importance; in fact, laughter is rare enough in his plays, as only the most elevated thoughts and emotions were permissible. Thirdly, he attacked the convention of representing only persons of high rank, "as if," he said, "Princes, etc., were alone liable to misfortune arising from Vice or Weakness in themselves or others," and he drew his characters solely from the middle classes. The lower classes had to be excluded on the grounds of vulgarity. Lillo's prose is poor stuff; as will be seen from the extract quoted below, the greater part of it is really unconscious blank verse, so

difficult was it to shake off the shackles of the heroic tragedy and its predecessors. His moral intent is, to our feelings at all events, inhuman and perverse, and it is worked out in the persons of impossible characters in ridiculous situations. But in spite of the poverty of his achievement his principles, which were exactly those of the cultured class that still formed the theatre-going public, set a fashion of emasculate and miserable drama that hung like a cloud over the English stage during the whole of the century.

II. Classical Tragedy. Besides the plays of this kind and the comedies of Goldsmith and Sheridan (which will be considered later) a number of classical tragedies were written in the French style, which was still widely admired and copied in England. The best known of these are Joseph Addison's *Cato* (1713) and the tragedies of Edward Young and James Thomson; but most of them are poor plays, laboured in expression and full of rant. More successful tragedy-writers were Nicholas Rowe and John Home, a Scotsman. Rowe's *Jane Shore*, written in 1714 "in imitation of Shakespeare's style," shows a remarkable sense of dramatic possibilities, though the verse and diction are stilted and laboured. It was a great favourite with actors, and was popular well into the nineteenth century. Home's *Douglas* (1755), a romantic tragedy, was successful in both Edinburgh and London (where it was produced by Garrick). It is not free from sentimentality, but it is one of the strongest plays of the period. In tragedy, however, as well as in comedy, there was astonishing lack of originality, and the eighteenth century is chiefly important in the history of the drama as an era of criticism, adaptation, burlesque, and the development of stage device and acting technique.

III. Criticism, Adaptation, and Revival of Old Plays. The most important critical activity was the series of annotated editions of Shakespeare. Rowe's was the first, in

1709, and it was followed by those of Alexander Pope in 1725 and Theobald in 1733. Hamer's and Warburton's editions came a few years later, and those of Capell, Johnson and Malone, and Stevens during the latter half of the century. In the light of modern criticism these editions have lost much of their value, but they show the increasing appreciation of Shakespeare's genius as a literary as well as a dramatic artist. This appreciation was not limited to Shakespeare; the publication of *Dodsley's Old Plays* in 1744 is an indication of the desire to preserve and make known the best plays of the two preceding centuries. But this interest in old plays was not confined to literary criticism; in fact, from the literary point of view the eighteenth century is the darkest period of dramatic history. Throughout these years there was considerable activity and ingenuity in the theatre, and there was a high standard of acting; and though much of the theatrical experiment was coloured by the limited conditions and opinions of the age, and has now proved to be misdirected, it at all events kept the theatre alive as a social and intellectual force, and paved the way for further experiment and improvement. The actor and the theatre were always first in the minds of those who wrote or worked for them, and these spared no pains to make their plays as effective as they possibly could in the conditions in which they found themselves. Most of the new plays had no literary pretensions at all, but were mere outlines to be filled in by managers and actors. Even old plays, which were revived in great numbers, were used principally as a means for new interpretation and original presentation. The man who is chiefly remembered in this connexion is David Garrick, the actor-manager-dramatist, who was the foremost figure in the world of the theatre during the latter part of the century. Most of his productions were adaptations, though he wrote some very tolerable plays himself (usually in collaboration); one of the

best is *The Clandestine Marriage*, written with George Colman the elder in 1767. Garrick attempted to improve everything that he touched, but he did so by a combination of realism and sentimentality which is no improvement to modern tastes. He played *Macbeth* in a scarlet and gold uniform. *King Lear* was given a happy ending.[1] Dancers, real lakes, transformation scenes, and all conceivable 'up-to-date' devices were introduced on all possible occasions, and every display of passion or hint of 'low comedy' was carefully changed into artificial stage-dialogue and conventional theatrical emotions. This combination of realism in presentation and artificiality in idea resulted in a hybrid and ridiculous form of drama which in our own times has become almost peculiar to the sensational productions of the cinema industry.

IV. Theatre Conditions. By 1762 the use of chairs on the stage for the privileged few had been discontinued, and the 'apron-stage' was considerably reduced and often abolished, permanent lamp-footlights being installed across the front of the main stage. In 1763 Garrick returned from a visit to Paris and introduced still more modern inventions. It is obvious that the new technique puzzled the writers, and we notice in the plays of the latter part of the eighteenth century a frequent failure to manage 'asides,' soliloquy, and other devices which were simple enough on the earlier form of stage, where the actor was almost surrounded by his audience. Opera became more and more popular, and comic 'ballad-opera'[2] made its appearance, first in John Gay's successful political and social satire

[1] It is noticeable that both Lamb and Hazlitt, two of the most enlightened Shakespearean critics, frequently stated that they could not endure to watch the productions of this period, though they acknowledged their cleverness.

[2] 'Ballad-opera' and 'comic opera' (the former constructed from traditional, the latter from original airs) are distinguished from 'grand opera' in that they employ spoken dialogue instead of recitative between the solos or concerted numbers.

The Beggar's Opera (1728), and later in Sheridan's still more popular operetta *The Duenna* (1775). John Rich introduced regular pantomime in the early part of the century. Henry Fielding wrote a number of short comedies (called 'after-pieces') and burlesques, notably *The Tragedy of Tragedies, or The Life of Tom Thumb the Great* (1730), a most amusing burlesque of the sentimental tragedy. He did much to give real farce and broad comedy a recognized place on the stage. Samuel Foote and George Colman the elder kept the spirit of mirth alive; but as their work consisted chiefly in topical burlesque, caricature, and impersonation it has little interest to-day.

The eighteenth-century theatre was no longer confined to the Court circle; neither Queen Anne nor her successors were interested in the playhouses. But the audiences were still limited to a small section of the community, and the drama was far from being representative of national life. The age was essentially domestic, and the growing popularity of the novel kept many at home who might otherwise have been drawn to the theatre. There were only three theatres (in Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and the Haymarket), and they were recognized as social meeting-places for the *beau-monde*. But it was a very different *beau-monde* from that of the Restoration era. It was—outwardly, at all events—extremely proper and incredibly artificial and bound by repressive convention. The horror of vulgarity was so strong in this over-civilized community that it led to the complete suppression of both wit and passion; audiences loved to see the heroine in floods of tears while the repentant villain mouthed his interminable monologues of remorse. They preferred to weep rather than to shudder or to laugh.

V. Goldsmith and Sheridan. Among this morbid succession of tearful 'comedies' the plays of Oliver Goldsmith and Richard Brinsley Sheridan stand out not only as

brilliantly satirical comedies of real wit, but as masterpieces of dramatic art. They had no immediate followers; the sentimental drama was too firmly rooted and too insensitive to be dislodged even by satire as clever as this. But these authors are in the true succession of English comedy; they are the descendants of Shakespeare, Jonson, Heywood, and Congreve, and the forbears of Oscar Wilde, Bernard Shaw, Somerset Maugham, Galsworthy, and Noel Coward. They made fearless use of hackneyed situations, such as the marriage conflict between parent and child and mistaken identity, disguise, and concealment. But Goldsmith enlivened these devices with humour, and Sheridan with wit, and though their work lacks inspiration the characters control the action throughout, and the plays are constructed with a sure sense of the theatre. Goldsmith in particular despised the sentimental comedy, and set himself to ridicule it. He pointed out that it was the easiest possible form of drama to write, and he insisted on comic situation, humour, and character, all of which the sentimental comedy lacked. His first play, *The Good-natured Man* (1768), is closely modelled on Vanbrugh and Farquhar. *She Stoops to Conquer* (1773) is a better play; though farcically improbable in plot, the fun never drags for a moment. Sheridan was a more ingenious and experienced practical dramatist (he was manager of the Drury Lane theatre), but inferior to Goldsmith in genius. His two most famous plays, *The Rivals* (1775) and *The School for Scandal* (1777), have, like *She Stoops to Conquer*, never lost their popularity, and his clever burlesque, *The Critic* (1779), is very much more than a mere re-edition of Buckingham's *The Rehearsal*.[1] He adapted several old plays; his *A Trip to Scarborough* (Vanbrugh's *The Relapse*[2]), written in 1777, is one of his most successful adaptations. The plays of both Goldsmith and Sheridan, particularly the former, are remarkable for their

[1] See p. 151, note 1.

[2] See pp. 148, 158–165.

literary quality. With the exception of their work theatrical drama sank below the level of literature for at least a century.

VI. Drama of the Romantic Revival. During the first half of the nineteenth century several new theatres were opened in London, and the drama, for the first time since Elizabethan days, began to be a popular amusement again. These playhouses were really illegal, as theatres were still under Court control,[1] and only the two that have already been mentioned were licensed; the additional ones were not legalized till 1843. The high tradition of English acting was upheld by famous actors and actresses such as Macready, Kean, and Mrs Siddons, and the world of the theatre was even more alive and vigorous than in the preceding century. But it was a period of revival and criticism: the creative output was not remarkable. There was no dramatic writer of conspicuous ability; the Romantic poets cared little for the theatre, and though they all wrote plays few of them were even intended, and almost none were suitable, for stage presentation. Hazlitt wrote in 1820 that no modern writer could write a tragedy.[2] It was, as he pointed out, not an age that lent itself to dramatic expression—it was fundamentally critical, romantic, reflective, and philosophic.

The poetical plays of the Romantic poets mark the first appearance of 'closet drama' in English literature—that is, of drama which is intended to be read, and is written with little or no thought of theatric conditions and effect. Sir Walter Scott wrote several plays, only two of which were intended to be acted. Wordsworth's *The Borderers* (1795) and Coleridge's *Osorio* (1797) were written for the stage,

[1] Even at the present day the licensing of plays and theatres is done by the Lord Chamberlain.

[2] It is noticeable that the dramatic criticism of Hazlitt himself, as well as that of Lamb and Coleridge and others of the period, is distinctly literary rather than theatric.

but are not effective either as plays or as literature, and the same may be said of the dramas of Keats, Southey, and Charles Lamb. Excellent examples of closet drama, of plays that are fine poems but entirely unfitted for presentation, are Byron's plays (especially *Manfred*, written in 1817, and *Cain*, written in 1821) and Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound* (1819). Shelley, however, wrote one tragedy, *The Cenci* (1820), which was intended for a popular drama, and is, in spite of faults in subject, arrangement, and expression, a fairly effective stage-play and the only one of real merit produced by a poet of the Romantic Revival. It was considered unsuitable for the stage at the time, but has recently been revived with some success both on the Continent and in London. The most notable practical dramatist of the period was James Sheridan Knowles, who wrote sixteen plays of different kinds, using verse in all of them. His comedies were more popular at the time, but his *William Tell*, a tragedy written in 1825, is now his best-known play. He aimed at purging poetic drama of extravagance, and did a great deal to break down the sentimental tradition of the last century; although his work was not of high quality it showed remarkable power of domestic feeling, and was of practical value in the development of the drama.

It was about this time that melodrama began to be recognized as a definite species of drama distinct from tragedy and comedy. The French word *mélodrame* originally implied a play containing a good deal of dumb-show, and the accompaniment of both dumb-show and dialogue by appropriate orchestral music. But later, in England, the term came to be used of plays which depended upon situation, sensation, and machinery rather than on character.

THE HISTORY OF GEORGE BARNWELL

George Lillo

(1731)

George Barnwell, the London merchant, a universally popular and respected young man, has fallen under the influence of an unprincipled woman, who has wheedled more and more money out of him, persuading him first to rob his generous employer, and then to murder his rich uncle. In the following scene we see him preparing for and committing the murder.

No scenery or properties are necessary, and the costumes should be those of the earlier part of the eighteenth century.

Act III, Scenes iii and iv

A walk at some distance from a country seat. Enter BARNWELL.

BARNWELL. A dismal gloom obscures the face of day: either the sun has slipt behind a cloud, or journeys down the west of heaven with more than common speed, to avoid the sight of what I am doomed to act. Since I set forth on this accurs'd design, where-e'er I tread, methinks, the solid earth trembles beneath my feet. Yonder limpid stream, whose hoary fall has made a natural cascade, as I passed by, in doleful accents seemed to murmur—Murder! The earth, the air, the water seemed concerned. But that's not strange: the world is punished, and Nature feels a shock, when Providence permits a good man's fall. Just heaven! Then what should I feel for him that was my father's only brother, and since his death has been to me a father! Yet here I stand his destined murderer!—I stiffen with horror at my own impiety!—'Tis yet unperformed—what if I quit my bloody purpose, and fly the place! [*Going, then stops.*] But whither, oh, whither shall I fly? My master's once friendly doors are ever shut against me; and without money Millwood will never see me more, and she has got such firm possession of my heart, and governs there with such despotic sway, that life is not to be endured without her. Ay, there's the cause of all my sin and sorrow: 'tis more than love: it is the fever of the soul, and madness of desire. In vain does nature, reason, conscience, all oppose it: the impetuous passion bears down all before it, and drives me on to lust, to theft and murder. Oh, conscience! Feeble guide to virtue! Thou only show'st us when we go astray, but wantest power to stop us

in our course—Ha! In yonder shady walk I see my uncle—He's alone! Now for my disguise. [*Plucks out a mask.*] This is his hour of private meditation. Thus daily he prepares his soul for heaven, whilst I—— But what have I to do with heaven! Ha! No struggles, conscience——

Hence, hence, remorse, and every thought that's good!
The storm that lust began, must end in blood!

[*He puts on the mask, draws a pistol, and exit. Enter* UNCLE.

UNCLE. If I were superstitious, I should fear some danger lurked unseen, or death were nigh. A heavy melancholy clouds my spirits. My imagination is filled with ghastly forms of dreary graves, and bodies changed by death; when the pale, lengthened visage attracts each weeping eye, and fills the musing soul, at once, with grief and horror, pity and aversion. I will indulge the thought. The wise man prepares himself for death, by making it familiar to his mind. [*Enter* BARNWELL, *at a distance.*] O death, thou strange mysterious power, seen every day, yet never understood but by the incommunicative dead, what art thou? The extensive mind of man, that with a thought circles the earth's vast globe, sinks to the centre, or ascends above the stars, that worlds exotic finds, or thinks it finds, thy thick clouds attempts to pass in vain: lost and bewildered in the horrid gloom, defeated she returns more doubtful than before, of nothing certain but of labour lost.

[*During this speech* BARNWELL *sometimes presents the pistol, and draws it back again.*

BARNWELL. Oh, 'tis impossible!

[*Throwing down the pistol.* UNCLE *starts, and attempts to draw his sword.*

UNCLE. A man so near me! Armed and masked——

BARNWELL. Nay, then, there's no retreat.

[*Plucks a poniard from his bosom, and stabs his uncle.*

UNCLE. Oh! I am slain! All gracious heaven, regard the prayer of thy dying servant. Bless with the choicest blessings my dearest nephew, forgive my murderer, and take my fleeting soul to endless mercy.

[BARNWELL *throws off his mask, runs to him, and, kneeling by him, raises and chafes him.*

BARNWELL. Expiring saint! Oh, murdered, martyred uncle! Lift up your dying eyes, and view your nephew in your murderer! Oh, do not look so tenderly upon me—let indignation lighten from

your eyes, and blast me ere you die!—By heaven, he weeps, in pity of my woes—tears, tears, for blood! The murdered, in the agonies of death, weeps for his murderer! Oh, speak your pious purpose: pronounce my pardon, then, and take me with you!—He would, but cannot.—Oh, why, with such affection, do you press my murdering hand? What! Will you kiss me? [BARNWELL *kisses his uncle, who groans and dies.*] He's gone for ever—and, oh! I follow! [*Swoons away upon his uncle's dead body.*] Do I still live to press the suffering bosom of the earth? Do I still breathe, and taint with my infectious breath the wholesome air? Let pity strike and end my wretched being! Murder, the worst of crimes, and parricide, the worst of murders, and this the worst of parricides! This execrable art of mine is without a parallel. Oh, may it ever stand alone, the last of murders, as it is the worst!

The rich man thus, in torment and despair,
Preferred his vain, but charitable prayer:
The fool, his own soul lost, would fain be wise
For others' good: but heaven his suit denies.
By laws and means well known we stand or fall;
And one eternal rule remains for all.

SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

(1773)

The scene is in the hall of Mr Hardcastle's house, to which Hastings and Marlow have come in the belief that it is an inn, and Mr Hardcastle the innkeeper. They have come down to seek the hands of Miss Hardcastle and Miss Neville (her cousin) respectively, and are naturally surprised when these ladies appear at the inn. Marlow is always afflicted with nervousness in the presence of ladies.

The room should be plainly furnished, as far as possible in eighteenth-century style. Costumes of the period. It should be remembered that manners were elaborate, with full bows, curtsies, etc.

ACT II, SCENE 1

Enter HARDCASTLE, *bringing in* HASTINGS *and* MARLOW, *who are in riding-clothes.* HASTINGS *sits down by the fire, and takes his boots off. He and* MARLOW *take no notice of* HARDCASTLE.

HARDCASTLE. Gentlemen, once more you are heartily welcome. Which is Mr Marlow? [MARLOW *bows.*] Sir, you're heartily

welcome. It's not my way, you see, to receive my guests with my back to the fire. I like to give them a hearty welcome in the old style at my gate.

[*He goes up to* HASTINGS *to shake hands, and* HASTINGS *gives him his boots, which he carries to the door, shaking his head.*

MARLOW. He has got our names from the servants already. [*To* HARDCASTLE] We approve your caution and hospitality, sir. [To HASTINGS] I have been thinking, George, of changing our travelling dresses in the morning. I am grown confoundedly ashamed of mine.

HARDCASTLE. I beg, Mr Marlow, you'll use no ceremony in this house.

HASTINGS. I fancy, Charles, you're right; the first blow is half the battle. I intend opening the campaign with the white and gold.

HARDCASTLE. Mr Marlow—Mr Hastings—gentlemen—pray, be under no restraint in this house. This is Liberty Hall, gentlemen. You may do just as you please here.

MARLOW. Yet, George, if we open the campaign too fiercely at first, we may want ammunition before it is over. I think to reserve the embroidery to secure a retreat.

HARDCASTLE. Your talking of a retreat, Mr Marlow, puts me in mind of the Duke of Marlborough, when we went to besiege Denain. He first summoned the garrison——

MARLOW. Don't you think the *ventre d'or* waistcoat will do with the plain brown?

HARDCASTLE. He first summoned the garrison, which might consist of about five thousand men——

HASTINGS. I think not. Brown and yellow mix but very poorly.

HARDCASTLE. I say, gentlemen, as I was telling you, he summoned the garrison, which might consist of about five thousand men——

MARLOW. The girls like finery.

HARDCASTLE. Which might consist of about five thousand men, well appointed with stores, ammunition, and other implements of war. Now, says the Duke of Marlborough to George Brooks that stood next to him—you must have heard of George Brooks—I'll pawn my dukedom, says he, but I take that garrison without spilling a drop of blood. So——

MARLOW. What, my good friend, if you give us a glass of punch in the mean time, it would help us to carry on the siege with vigour.

HARDCASTLE. Punch, sir! [*Aside*] This is the most unaccountable kind of modesty I ever met with.

[*He fetches a punch-bowl, ladle, and glasses.*

MARLOW. Yes, sir, punch. A glass of warm punch, after our journey, will be comfortable. This is Liberty Hall, you know.

HARDCASTLE. Here's a cup, sir. Will you be so good as to pledge me, sir?

MARLOW [*to* HASTINGS]. A very impudent fellow this! But he's a character, and I'll humour him a little. [*To* HARDCASTLE] Sir, my service to you. [*Drinks.*] I suppose you have a good deal of business in this part of the country?

HARDCASTLE. I do stir about a great deal, that's certain. Half the differences of the parish are adjusted in this very parlour.

MARLOW. And you have an argument in your cup, old gentleman, better than any in Westminster Hall.

HARDCASTLE. Aye, young gentleman, that and a little philosophy.

MARLOW [*aside*]. Well, this is the first time I ever heard of an innkeeper's philosophy.

HASTINGS. So then, like an experienced general, you attack them on every quarter. If you find their reason manageable, you attack it with your philosophy; if you find they have no reason, you attack them with this. Here's your health, my philosopher!

[*Drinks.*

HARDCASTLE. Good, very good, thank you, ha! ha! Your generalship puts me in mind of the Prince Eugene, when he fought the Turks at the battle of Belgrade. You shall hear.

MARLOW. Instead of the battle of Belgrade, I believe it's almost time to talk about supper. What has your philosophy got in the house for supper!

HARDCASTLE. For supper, sir? [*Aside*] Was ever such a request made to a man in his own house?

MARLOW. Yes, sir, supper, sir; I begin to feel an appetite. I shall make devilish work in the larder to-night, I promise you.

HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. Such a brazen dog sure never my eyes beheld. [*Aloud*] Why, really, sir, as for supper I can't well tell. My Dorothy, and the cook-maid, settle these things between them. I leave these kind of things entirely to them.

MARLOW. You do, do you? When I travel I always choose to regulate my own supper. Let the cook be called. No offence, I hope, sir.

HARDCASTLE. Oh, no, sir; none in the least; yet I don't know how; our Bridget, the cook-maid, is not very communicative on these occasions. Should we send for her, she might scold us all out of the house.

HASTINGS. Let's see your list of the larder, then. I ask it as a favour. I always match my appetite to my bill of fare.

HARDCASTLE. Sir, you have a right to command here. [*Calling to a servant off*] Here, Roger, bring us the bill of fare for to-night's supper. I believe it's drawn out. Your manner, Mr Hastings, puts me in mind of my uncle, Colonel Wallop. It was a saying of his that no man was sure of his supper till he had eaten it.

Enter ROGER *with the bill of fare*

HASTINGS [*to* MARLOW]. All upon the high ropes! His uncle a colonel! We shall soon hear of his mother being a justice of the peace. But let's hear the bill of fare.

MARLOW [*perusing*]. What's here! For the first course; for the second course; for the dessert. The devil, sir, do you think we have brought down the whole joiners' company, or the Corporation of Bedford to eat up such a supper? Two or three little things, clean and comfortable, will do.

HASTINGS. But let's hear it.

MARLOW. For the first course, at the top, "a pig, and prune sauce."

HASTINGS. Damn your pig, I say.

MARLOW. And damn your prune sauce, say I. At the bottom, "a calf's tongue and brains."

HASTINGS. Let your brains be knocked out, my good sir; I don't like 'em.

MARLOW. Or you may clap them on a plate by themselves. I do.

HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. Their impudence confounds me. [*Aloud*] Gentlemen, you are my guests, make what alterations you please. Is there anything else you wish to alter, gentlemen?

MARLOW. Item. "A pork pie, a boiled rabbit and sausages, a Florentine, a shaking-pudding, and a dish of tiff-taff-taffety cream!"

HASTINGS. Confound your made dishes! I'm for plain eating.

MARLOW. Well, sir, send us what you please. [*He gives the menu to* HARDCASTLE, *who passes it to* ROGER. *Exit* ROGER.] And now to see that our beds are aired, and properly taken care of.

HARDCASTLE. I entreat you'll leave that to me. You shall not stir a step.

MARLOW. Leave that to you! I protest, sir, you must excuse me, I always look to these things myself. [*Aside*] A very troublesome fellow this, as ever I met with.

HARDCASTLE. Well, sir, I'm resolved at least to attend you. [*Aside*] This may be modern modesty, but I never saw anything look so much like old-fashioned impudence.

[*Exeunt* MARLOW *and* HARDCASTLE.

HASTINGS. So I find this fellow's civilities begin to grow troublesome. But who can be angry at those assiduities which are meant to please him? Ha! What do I see! Miss Neville, by all that's happy!

Enter MISS NEVILLE

MISS NEVILLE. My dear Hastings! To what unexpected good fortune! To what accident am I to ascribe this happy meeting?

HASTINGS. Rather let me ask the same question, as I could never have hoped to meet my dearest Constance at an inn.

MISS NEVILLE. An inn! My aunt, my guardian, lives here. What could induce you to think this house an inn?

HASTINGS. I assure you, a young fellow whom we accidentally met at a house hard by directed us hither, as to an inn.

MISS NEVILLE. Certainly it must be one of my hopeful cousin's tricks, of whom you have heard me talk so often, ha! ha! ha! But hark! I have been for some time persuading my aunt to let me wear my jewels, in which my fortune chiefly consists; I fancy I'm very near succeeding. The instant they are put into my possession, you shall find me ready to make them and myself yours.

HASTINGS. Perish the baubles! Your person is all I desire. In the mean time, my friend Marlow must not be let into his mistake. I know the strange reserve of his temper is such, that if abruptly informed of it, he would instantly quit the house before our plan was ripe for execution.

MISS NEVILLE. But how shall we keep him in the deception?

Miss Hardcastle is just returned from walking; what if we still continue to deceive him? This, this way——

[*They go up-stage, talking.*

Enter MARLOW

MARLOW. The assiduities of these good people tease me beyond bearing. My host seems to think it ill manners to leave me alone, and so he claps not only himself but his old-fashioned wife on my back. They talk of coming to sup with us too; and then, I suppose, we are to run the gauntlet through all the rest of the family. What have we got here?

HASTINGS. My dear Charles! Let me congratulate you! The most fortunate accident—Who do you think is just alighted?

MARLOW. Cannot guess.

HASTINGS. Our mistresses, boy, Miss Hardcastle and Miss Neville. Give me leave to introduce Miss Constance Neville to your acquaintance. [*They bow.*] Miss Hardcastle has just stepped into the next room, and will be back in an instant. Wasn't it lucky, eh?

MARLOW [*aside*]. I have been mortified enough of all conscience, and here comes something to complete my embarrassment.

HASTINGS. Well! But wasn't it the most fortunate thing in the world?

MARLOW [*bowing*]. Oh, yes. Very fortunate—a most joyful encounter;—but our dresses, George, you know, are in disorder—what if we should postpone the happiness till to-morrow! To-morrow at her own house—it will be every bit as convenient—and rather more respectful—To-morrow let it be.

[*Going, but* HASTINGS *holds him back.*

MISS NEVILLE. By no means, sir. Your ceremony will displease her. The disorder of your dress will show the ardour of your impatience. Besides, she knows you are in the house, and will permit you to see her.

MARLOW [*aside*]. Oh, the devil! How shall I support it? [*Runs after* HASTINGS, *who is stealing out.*] Hastings, you must not go! You are to assist me, you know. I shall be confoundedly ridiculous. Yet, hang it, I'll take courage. Hem!

HASTINGS. Pshaw, man! It's but the first plunge, and all's over. She's but a woman, you know.

MARLOW. And of all women she that I most dread to encounter!

Enter MISS HARDCASTLE

HASTINGS. Miss Hardcastle. Mr Marlow. [*They bow,* MARLOW *never looking* MISS HARDCASTLE *in the face throughout the interview.*] I'm proud of bringing two persons of such merit together.

MISS HARDCASTLE [*after a pause, in which* MARLOW *appears very uneasy and disconcerted*]. I'm glad of your safe arrival, sir—I'm told you had some accidents by the way.

MARLOW. Only a few, madam. Yes, we had some. Yes, madam, a good many accidents, but should be sorry—madam—or rather glad of any accidents—that are so agreeably concluded. Hem!

HASTINGS [*aside to* MARLOW]. You never spoke better in your whole life. Keep it up, and I'll ensure you the victory.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I'm afraid you flatter, sir. You that have seen so much of the finest company can find little entertainment in an obscure corner of the country.

MARLOW [*gathering courage*]. I have lived, indeed, in the world, madam: but I have kept very little company. I have been but an observer upon life, madam, while others were enjoying it.

MISS HARDCASTLE. But that, I am told, is the way to enjoy it at last.

HASTINGS [*aside to* MARLOW]. Cicero never spoke better. Once more, and you are confirmed in assurance for ever.

MARLOW [*aside to* HASTINGS]. Stand by me then, and when I'm down, throw in a word or two to set me up again.

MISS HARDCASTLE. An observer, like you, upon life, were, I fear, disagreeably employed, since you must have had much more to censure than to approve.

MARLOW. Pardon me, madam, I was always willing to be amused. The folly of most people is rather an object of mirth than uneasiness.

HASTINGS [*aside to* MARLOW]. Bravo, bravo! Never spoke so well in your whole life. [*Aloud*] Well, Miss Hardcastle, I see that you and Mr Marlow are going to be very good company. I believe our being here will but embarrass the interview.

MARLOW. Not in the least, Mr Hastings. We like your company of all things. [*Running up to him*] Zounds, George, sure you won't go! How can you leave us?

HASTINGS. Our presence will but spoil conversation, so we'll retire to the next room. [*Exeunt* HASTINGS *and* MISS NEVILLE.

MISS HARDCASTLE. But you have not been wholly an observer, I presume, sir: the ladies, I should hope, have employed some part of your addresses.

MARLOW [*relapsing into timidity*]. Pardon me, madam, I—I—I—as yet have studied—only—to—deserve them.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And that, some say, is the very worst way to obtain them.

MARLOW. Perhaps so, madam. But I love to converse only with the more grave and sensible part of the sex. But I'm afraid I grow tiresome.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Not at all, sir. There is nothing I like so much as grave conversation myself; I could hear it for ever. Indeed, I have often been surprised how a man of sentiment could ever admire those light airy pleasures, where nothing reaches the heart.

MARLOW. It's a disease—of the mind, madam. In the variety of tastes there must be some who, wanting a relish—for—um—ah—um——

MISS HARDCASTLE. I understand you, sir. There must be some who, wanting a relish for refined pleasures, pretend to despise what they are incapable of tasting.

MARLOW. My meaning, madam, but infinitely better expressed. [MISS HARDCASTLE *laughs behind her fan: she gets more and more amused as this goes on.*] And I can't help observing—ah——

MISS HARDCASTLE. You were going to observe, sir?

MARLOW. I was observing, madam—I protest, madam, I forget what I was going to observe.

MISS HARDCASTLE [*aside*]. I vow and so do I. [*Aloud*] You were observing, sir, that in this age of hypocrisy—something about hypocrisy, sir.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. In this age of hypocrisy there are few who upon strict enquiry do not—a—a—a——

MISS HARDCASTLE. I understand you perfectly, sir.

MARLOW [*aside*]. Egad! And that's more than I do myself. [*Aloud*] But I'm sure I tire you, madam.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Not in the least, sir; there's something so agreeable and spirited in your manner, such life and force—pray, sir, go on.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. I was saying—that there are some occasions—when a total want of courage, madam, destroys all the—and puts us—upon—a—a—a——

MISS HARDCASTLE. I agree with you entirely, a want of courage on some occasions assumes the appearance of ignorance, and betrays us when we most want to excel. I beg you'll proceed.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. Morally speaking, madam—But I see Miss Neville expecting us in the next room. I would not intrude for the world.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I protest, sir, I never was more agreeably entertained in all my life. Pray go on.

MARLOW. Yes, madam, I was—But she beckons us to join her. Madam, shall I do myself the honour to attend you?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Well, then, I'll follow.

MARLOW [*aside*]. This pretty smooth dialogue has done for me. [*Exit.*

THE RIVALS

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

(1775)

The scene is in Captain Absolute's rooms at Bath, where he is supposed to be recruiting for his regiment. His father, Sir Anthony Absolute, has called to tell him of a marriage he proposes for him with Miss Lydia Languish, but as he does not mention her name Captain Absolute does not realize that she is the lady whom he is already courting in the disguise of Ensign Beverley. For Lydia, being of a romantic disposition, has no objections to eloping with an ensign, but will not hear of a formal contract with a captain. The furniture should be as plain as possible. Eighteenth-century costume—Captain Absolute in uniform.

Act II, Scene I

Enter CAPTAIN ABSOLUTE *and* SIR ANTHONY

ABSOLUTE. Sir, I am delighted to see you here; looking so well! Your sudden arrival at Bath made me apprehensive for your health.

SIR ANTHONY. Very apprehensive, I dare say, Jack. What, are you recruiting here, hey?

ABSOLUTE. Yes, sir, I am on duty.

SIR ANTHONY. Well, Jack, I am glad to see you. [*Sits down.*] I had been going to write to you on a little matter of business. Jack, I have been considering that I grow old and infirm, and shall probably not trouble you long.

ABSOLUTE. Pardon me, sir, I never saw you look more strong and hearty; and I pray frequently that you may continue so.

SIR ANTHONY. I hope your prayers may be heard, with all my heart. Well, then, Jack, I have been considering that I am so strong and hearty that I may continue to plague you a long time. And it is my wish, while I yet live, to have my boy make some figure in the world. I have resolved, therefore, to fix you at once in a noble independence.

ABSOLUTE. Sir, your kindness overpowers me—such generosity makes the gratitude of reason more lively than the sensations even of filial affection.

SIR ANTHONY. I am glad you are so sensible of my attention—and you shall be master of a large estate in a few weeks.

ABSOLUTE. Let my future life, sir, speak the gratitude that I cannot express. Yet, sir, I presume you would not wish me to quit the army?

SIR ANTHONY. Oh, that shall be as your wife chooses.

ABSOLUTE. My wife, sir?

SIR ANTHONY. Aye, aye, settle that between you—settle that between you.

ABSOLUTE. A *wife*, sir, did you say?

SIR ANTHONY. Aye, a wife—why, did I not mention her before?

ABSOLUTE. Not a word of her, sir.

SIR ANTHONY. Odd so! I mustn't forget *her*, though. Yes, Jack, the independence I was talking of is by a marriage—the fortune is saddled with a wife—but I suppose that makes no difference.

ABSOLUTE. Sir! sir! You amaze me!

SIR ANTHONY. Why, what the devil's the matter with the fool! Just now you were all gratitude and duty.

ABSOLUTE. I was, sir. You talked to me of independence and a fortune, but not a word of a wife.

SIR ANTHONY. Why—what difference does that make? Odds life, sir, if you have the estate, you must take it with the live stock on it, as it stands.

ABSOLUTE. If my happiness is to be the price, I must beg leave to decline the purchase. Pray, sir, who is the lady?

SIR ANTHONY. What's that to you, sir? Come, give me your promise to love, and to marry her directly.

ABSOLUTE. Sure, sir, this is not very reasonable, to summon my affections for a lady I know nothing of!

SIR ANTHONY. I am sure, sir, it is more unreasonable in you to *object* to a lady you know nothing of.

ABSOLUTE. Then, sir, I must tell you plainly, that my heart is engaged to another.

SIR ANTHONY. Then pray let it send an excuse. It is very sorry —but *business* prevents it waiting on her.

ABSOLUTE. You must excuse me, sir, if I tell you, once for all, that in this point I cannot obey you.

SIR ANTHONY [*restraining himself with difficulty*]. Hark 'ee, Jack: I have heard you for some time with patience—I have been cool—quite cool; but take care—you know I am compliance itself—when I am not thwarted; no one more easily led—when I have my own way; but don't put me in a frenzy.

ABSOLUTE. Sir, I must repeat it—in this I cannot obey you.

SIR ANTHONY. Now damn me if ever I call you Jack again while I live!

ABSOLUTE. Nay, sir, but hear me.

SIR ANTHONY. Sir, I won't hear a word—not a word! Not one word! So give me your promise by a nod—and I'll tell you what, Jack—I mean, you dog—if you don't, by——

ABSOLUTE. What, sir, promise to link myself to some mass of ugliness? To——

SIR ANTHONY. Zounds, sirrah, the lady shall be as ugly as I choose! She shall have a hump on each shoulder; she shall be as crooked as the crescent; her one eye shall roll like the bull's in Cox's museum; she shall have a skin like a mummy, and the beard of a Jew—she shall be all this, sirrah! Yet I will make you ogle her all day, and sit up all night to write sonnets to her beauty.

ABSOLUTE. This is reason and moderation indeed!

SIR ANTHONY. None of your sneering, puppy! No grinning, jackanapes!

ABSOLUTE. Sir, I hope I know my duty better.

SIR ANTHONY. None of your passion, sir! None of your violence, if you please!—It won't do with me, I promise you.

ABSOLUTE. Indeed, sir, I never was cooler in my life.

SIR ANTHONY. 'Tis a confounded lie! I know you are in a passion in your heart; I know you are, you hypocritical young dog! But it won't do.

ABSOLUTE. Nay, sir, upon my word.

SIR ANTHONY. So you will fly out! Can't you be cool, like me? What the devil good can passion do? Passion is of no service, you impudent, insolent, overbearing reprobate! There, you sneer again! Don't provoke me! But you rely upon the mildness of my temper—you do, you dog! You play upon the meekness of my disposition. Yet take care—the patience of a saint may be overcome at last!—But mark! I give you six hours and a half to consider of this: if you then agree, without any condition, to do everything on earth that I choose, why—confound you, I may in time forgive you. If not, zounds—don't enter the same hemisphere with me! Don't dare to breathe the same air, or use the same light with me; but get an atmosphere and sun of your own. I'll disown you, I'll disinherit you, I'll unget you! And damn me if ever I call you Jack again!

[*He is shown out, storming, by* ABSOLUTE.

The following scene is in Mrs Malaprop's lodging at Bath. Absolute has come to pay his formal addresses to Lydia, Mrs Malaprop's niece. As Lydia already knows him as Beverley, he proposes an ingenious scheme to preserve his double personality.

ACT III, SCENE III

MRS MALAPROP *and* ABSOLUTE *discovered*, MRS MALAPROP *with a letter in her hand.*

MRS MALAPROP. Your being Sir Anthony's son, Captain, would itself be a sufficient accommodation; but from the ingenuity of your appearance, I am convinced you deserve the character here given of you.

ABSOLUTE. Permit me to say, madam, that as I never yet have had the pleasure of seeing Miss Languish, my principal inducement in this affair at present is the honour of being allied to Mrs Malaprop.

MRS MALAPROP. Sir, you overpower me with good breeding. [*Aside*] He is the very pineapple of politeness! [*Aloud*] You are not ignorant, Captain, that this giddy girl has somehow contrived to fix her affections on a beggarly, strolling, eavesdropping ensign, whom none of us have seen, and nobody knows anything of?

ABSOLUTE. Oh, I have heard of the silly affair before. I'm not at all prejudiced against her on *that* account.

MRS MALAPROP. You are very good and very considerate, Captain. I am sure I have done everything in my power since I exploded the affair; long ago, I laid my positive conjunctions on her, never to think on the fellow again; I have since laid Sir Anthony's preposition before her; but, I am sorry to say, she seems resolved to decline every particle I enjoin her.

ABSOLUTE. It must be very distressing, indeed, ma'am.

MRS MALAPROP. Oh, it gives me the hydrostatics to such a degree! Behold, this very day, I have interceded another letter from the fellow.

ABSOLUTE [*aside*]. Oh, the devil, my last note!

MRS MALAPROP [*giving it to him*]. Nay, but read it, Captain.

ABSOLUTE. "My soul's idol, my adored Lydia." Very tender indeed!

MRS MALAPROP. Tender! Aye, and profane too, o' my conscience!

ABSOLUTE. "I am excessively alarmed at the intelligence you send me, the more so as my new rival——"

MRS MALAPROP. That's you, sir.

ABSOLUTE. "—has universally the character of being an accomplished gentleman, and a man of honour." Well, that's handsome enough.

MRS MALAPROP. But go on, sir; you'll see presently.

ABSOLUTE. "As for the old weather-beaten she-dragon who guards you——" Who can he mean by that?

MRS MALAPROP. Me, sir! *Me*—he means *me*! There! What do you think now? But go on a little further.

ABSOLUTE. Impudent scoundrel! "—it shall go hard but I will elude her vigilance, as I am told that the same ridiculous vanity which makes her dress up her coarse features, and deck her dull chat with hard words which she don't understand——"

MRS MALAPROP. There, sir, an attack upon my language! What do you think of that? An aspersion upon my parts of speech! Was ever such a brute! Sure, if I reprehend anything in this world, it is the use of my oracular tongue, and a nice derangement of epitaphs!

ABSOLUTE. He deserves to be hanged and quartered! Let me see: "—same ridiculous vanity——"

MRS MALAPROP. You need not read it again, sir.

[*She takes back the letter.*

ABSOLUTE. I beg pardon, ma'am. Was ever such assurance!

MRS MALAPROP. Did you ever hear anything like it?—He'll elude my vigilance, will he?—Yes, yes, ha! ha! We'll try who can plot best!

ABSOLUTE. So we will, ma'am, so we will. Ha! ha! ha! A conceited puppy, ha! ha! ha! But, pray, could not I see the lady for a few minutes now?—I should like to try her temper a little.

MRS MALAPROP. Why, I don't know. I doubt she is not prepared for a visit of this kind. There is a decorum in these matters.

ABSOLUTE. Oh, Lord! She won't mind *me*—only tell her Beverley——

MRS MALAPROP. Sir? What did you say of Beverley?

ABSOLUTE. Oh—er—aye—I was going to propose that you should tell her, by way of jest, that it was Beverley who was below—she'd come down fast enough then, ha! ha! ha!

MRS MALAPROP. 'Twould be a trick she well deserves. [*Going to the door*] Lydia, come down here! I don't wonder at your laughing, ha! ha! ha! His impudence is truly ridiculous! Come down I say, Lydia!

ABSOLUTE. 'Tis very ridiculous, upon my soul, madam, ha! ha! ha!

MRS MALAPROP. The little hussy won't hear. Well, I'll go and tell her at once who it is—she shall know that Captain Absolute is come to wait upon her. And I'll make her behave as becomes a young woman.

ABSOLUTE. As you please, ma'am. [*Exit* MRS MALAPROP.] Ha! ha! ha! I'll see whether she knows me.

[*He walks aside, and seems engaged in looking at the pictures.*

Enter LYDIA

LYDIA. What a scene am I now to go through! Surely nothing can be more dreadful than to be obliged to listen to the loathesome addresses of a stranger to one's heart. There stands the hated rival—an officer too! But oh, how unlike my Beverley! I wonder he don't begin; truly he seems a very negligent wooer! Quite at his ease, upon my word! I'll speak first.—Mr Absolute!

ABSOLUTE [*turning round*]. Ma'am.

LYDIA. Oh, heavens! Beverley!

ABSOLUTE. Hush!—hush, my life! Softly! Be not surprised!

LYDIA. I am so astonished, and so terrified! And so overjoyed! For heaven's sake, how came you here?

ABSOLUTE. Briefly, I have deceived your aunt. I was informed that my new rival was to visit here this evening, and contriving to have him kept away, have passed myself on her for Captain Absolute.

LYDIA. Oh, charming! And she really takes you for young Absolute?

ABSOLUTE. Oh, she's convinced of it. But we trifle with our precious moments—such another opportunity may not occur. Ah, my soul, what a life will we live! Love shall be our idol and support! We will worship him with a monastic strictness.

LYDIA. Will you then, Beverley, consent to forfeit that portion of my paltry wealth?—that burden on the wings of love?

ABSOLUTE. Oh, come to me rich only in this—in loveliness. Proud of calamity, we will enjoy the wreck of wealth, while the surrounding gloom of adversity shall make the flame of our pure love shine doubly bright. [*Embracing her.*] [*Aside*] If she holds out now, the devil is in it!

LYDIA [*aside*]. Now could I fly with him to the Antipodes!

Enter MRS MALAPROP, *listening*

MRS MALAPROP [*aside*]. I am impatient to know how the little hussy deports herself.

ABSOLUTE. So pensive, Lydia? Is then your warmth abated?

MRS MALAPROP [*aside*]. Warmth abated! So—she has been in a passion, I suppose.

LYDIA. No—nor ever can while I have life.

MRS MALAPROP [*aside*]. An ill-tempered little devil! She'll be in a passion all her life, will she?

LYDIA. Think not the idle threats of my ridiculous aunt can ever have any weight with me.

MRS MALAPROP [*aside*]. Very dutiful, upon my word!

LYDIA. Let *her* choice be Captain Absolute, but Beverley is mine.

MRS MALAPROP [*aside*]. I am astonished at her assurance! To his face! This to his face! I can contain no longer. [*Coming forward*] Why, thou vixen! I have overheard you! Captain Absolute, I know not how to apologize for her shocking rudeness.

ABSOLUTE [*aside*]. So all's safe, I find. [*Aloud*] I have hopes, madam, that time will bring the young lady——

MRS MALAPROP. Oh, there's nothing to be hoped for from her! She's as headstrong as an allegory on the banks of Nile.

LYDIA. Nay, madam, what do you charge me with now?

MRS MALAPROP. Why, thou unblushing rebel—didn't you tell this gentleman that Beverley, that stroller Beverley, possessed your heart? Tell me that, I say.

LYDIA. 'Tis true, madam, and none but Beverley——

MRS MALAPROP. Hold, hold, assurance! You shall not be so rude!

ABSOLUTE. Nay, pray, Mrs Malaprop, don't stop the young lady's speech: she's very welcome to talk thus: it does not hurt *me* in the least, I assure you.

MRS MALAPROP. You are too good, Captain, too amiably patient. But come with me, miss. Take a graceful leave of the gentleman.

LYDIA [*kissing her hand to him*]. May every blessing wait on my Beverley, my loved Bev——

MRS MALAPROP. Hussy! I'll choke the word in your throat! Come along! Come along!

[*She drags* LYDIA *out.* ABSOLUTE *stands kissing his hand.*

THE CENCI

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(1820)

Giacomo, Bernardo, and Beatrice, together with their mother Lucretia, have contrived and carried out the murder of their brutal father, Count Cenci. For this they all, except Bernardo, have been condemned to death by the Papal court. This is the last scene of the play, and it is laid in a hall of the prison in Rome. No scenery or properties are needed. Sixteenth-century Italian costume.

ACT V, SCENE IV

Enter CARDINAL CAMILLO *and* BERNARDO

CAMILLO. The Pope is stern; not to be moved or bent.
He looked as calm and keen as is the engine
Which tortures and which kills, exempt itself
From aught that it inflicts; a marble form,
A rite, a law, a custom; not a man.

He frowned, as if to frown had been the trick
Of his machinery, on the advocates
Presenting the defences, which he tore
And threw behind, muttering with hoarse, harsh voice:
"Which among ye defended their old father
Killed in his sleep?" Then to another: "Thou
Dost this in virtue of thy place; 'tis well."
He turned to me then, looking deprecation,
And said these three words coldly: "They must die."

BERNARDO. And yet you left him not?

CAMILLO. I urged him still;
Pleading, as I could guess, the devilish wrong
Which prompted your unnatural parent's death.
And he replied: "Paolo Santa Croce
Murdered his mother yester evening,
And he is fled. Parricide grows so rife
That soon, for some just cause no doubt, the young
Will strangle us all, dozing in our chairs.
Authority, and power, and hoary hair
Are grown crimes capital. You are my nephew,
You come to ask their pardon; stay a moment;
Here is their sentence; never see me more
Till, to the letter, it be all fulfilled."

BERNARDO. Oh, God, not so! I did believe indeed
That all you said was but sad preparation
For happy news. Oh, there are words and looks
To bend the sternest purpose! Once I knew them,
Now I forget them at my dearest need.
What think you if I seek him out, and bathe
His feet and robe with hot and bitter tears?
Importune him with prayers, vexing his brain
With my perpetual cries, until in rage
He strike me with his pastoral cross, and trample
Upon my prostrate head, so that my blood
May stain the senseless dust on which he treads,
And remorse waken mercy? I will do it!
Oh, wait till I return! [*He rushes out.*

CAMILLO. Alas, poor boy!
A wreck-devoted seaman thus might pray
To the deaf sea.

Enter LUCRETIA, GIACOMO, *and* BEATRICE, *guarded*

BEATRICE. I hardly dare to fear
That thou bring'st other news than a just pardon.
CAMILLO. May God in Heaven be less inexorable
To the Pope's prayers, than he has been to mine.
[*Showing her the papers*] Here is the sentence and the warrant.
BEATRICE [*wildly*]. Oh,
My God! Can it be possible I have
To die so suddenly? So young to go
Under the obscure, cold, rotting, wormy ground!
To be nailed down into a narrow place;
To see no more sweet sunshine; hear no more
Blithe voice of living thing; muse not again
Upon familiar thoughts, sad, yet thus lost—
How fearful! To be nothing! Or to be . . .
What? Oh, where am I? Let me not go mad!
Sweet Heaven, forgive weak thoughts! If there should be
No God, no Heaven, no Earth in the void world;
The wide, grey, lampless, deep, unpeopled world!
If all things then should be . . . my father's spirit,
His eye, his voice, his touch surrounding me;
The atmosphere and breath of my dead life!
If sometimes, as a shape more like himself,
Even the form which tortured me on earth,
Masked in grey hairs and wrinkles, he should come
And wind me in his hellish arms, and fix
His eyes on mine, and drag me down, down, down!
For was he not alone omnipotent
On earth, and ever present? Even tho' dead,
Does not his spirit live in all that breathe,
And work for me and mine still the same ruin,
Scorn, pain, despair? Who ever yet returned
To teach the laws of Death's untrodden realm?
Unjust perhaps as those which drive us now,
Oh, whither, whither?
LUCRETIA. Trust in God's sweet love,
The tender promises of Christ: ere night,
Think—we shall be in Paradise.
BEATRICE. 'Tis past!
Whatever comes, my heart shall sink no more.

And yet, I know not why, your words strike chill:
How tedious, false, and cold seem all things! I
Have met with much injustice in this world;
No difference has been made by God or man,
Or any power moulding my wretched lot,
'Twixt good or evil, as regarded me.
I am cut off from the only world I know,
From light, and life, and love, in youth's sweet prime.
You do well telling me to trust in God;
I hope I do trust in him. In whom else
Can any trust? And yet my heart is cold.

[*During the latter speeches* GIACOMO *has retired, conversing with* CAMILLO, *who now goes out;* GIACOMO *advances.*

GIACOMO. Know you not, Mother—Sister, know you not?
Bernardo even now is gone to implore
The Pope to grant our pardon.

LUCRETIA [*to* BEATRICE]. Child, perhaps
It will be granted. We may all then live
To make these woes a tale for distant years:
Oh, what a thought! It gushes to my heart
Like the warm blood.

BEATRICE. Yet both will soon be cold.
Oh, trample out that thought! Worse than despair,
Worse than the bitterness of death, is hope:
It is the only ill which can find place
Upon the giddy, sharp and narrow hour
Tottering beneath us. Plead with the swift frost
That it should spare the eldest flower of Spring:
Plead with awakening earthquake, o'er whose couch
Even now a city stands, strong, fair and free—
Now stench and blackness yawn, like death. Oh, plead
With famine, or wind-walking Pestilence,
Blind lightning, or the deaf sea, not with man!
Cruel, cold, formal man; righteous in words,
In deeds a Cain. No, Mother, we must die:
Since such is the reward of innocent lives;
Such the alleviation of worst wrongs.
And whilst our murderers live, and hard, cold men,
Smiling and slow, walk thro' a world of tears
To death as to life's sleep, 'twere just the grave

Were some strange joy for us. Come, obscure Death,
And wind me in thine all-embracing arms!
Like a fond mother hide me in thy bosom,
And rock me to the sleep from which none wake.
Live ye, who live, subject to one another
As we were once, who now——

BERNARDO *rushes in*

BERNARDO. Oh, horrible!
That tears, that looks, that hope poured forth in prayer,
Even till the heart is vacant and despairs,
Should all be vain! The ministers of death
Are waiting round the doors. I thought I saw
Blood on the face of one. . . . What if 'twere fancy?
Soon the heart's blood of all I love on earth
Will sprinkle him, and he will wipe it off
As if 'twere only rain. O life! O world!
Cover me! Let me be no more! To see
That perfect mirror of pure innocence
Wherein I gazed, and grew happy and good,
Shivered to dust! To see thee, Beatrice,
Who made all lovely thou didst look upon . . .
Thee, light of life . . . dead, dark! While I say "Sister,"
To hear I have no sister; and thou, Mother,
Whose love was as a bond to all our loves . . .
Dead, the sweet bond broken!

Enter CAMILLO *and* GUARDS

They come. Let me
Kiss those warm lips before their crimson leaves
Are blighted . . . white . . . cold! Say farewell, before
Death chokes that gentle voice! Oh, let me hear
You speak!

BEATRICE. Farewell, my tender brother. Think
Of our sad fate with gentleness, as now:
And let mild, pitying thoughts lighten for thee
Thy sorrow's load. Err not in harsh despair,
But tears and patience. One thing more, my child,
For thine own sake be constant to the love
Thou bearest us; and to the faith that I,

Tho' wrapped in a strange cloud of crime and shame,
Lived ever holy and unstained. And tho'
Ill tongues shall wound me, and our common name
Be as a mark stamped on thine innocent brow
For men to point at as they pass, do thou
Forbear, and never think a thought unkind
Of those, who perhaps love thee in their graves.
So mayest thou die as I do; fear and pain
Being subdued. Farewell! Farewell! Farewell!

BERNARDO. I cannot say farewell!

CAMILLO. Oh, Lady Beatrice!

BEATRICE. Give yourself no unnecessary pain,
My dear Lord Cardinal. Here, Mother, tie
My girdle for me, and bind up this hair
In any simple knot; ay, that does well.
And yours, I see, is coming down. How often
Have we done this for one another; now
We shall not do it any more. My Lord,
We are quite ready. Well, 'tis very well.

[*They are led out to execution.*

The following plays are recommended for study:

	Comedies	*Tragedies*
ADDISON		*Cato* (1713)
ROWE		*Jane Shore* (1714)
FIELDING	*The Tragedy of Tragedies, or The Life of Tom Thumb the Great* (1730)	
LILLO		*The London Merchant, or The History of George Barnwell* (1731)
GARRICK and COLMAN	*The Clandestine Marriage* (1767)	
GOLDSMITH	*The Good-natured Man* (1768)	
	She Stoops to Conquer (1773)	
SHERIDAN	*The Rivals* (1775)	
	The School for Scandal (1777)	
	The Critic (1779)	
BYRON		*Manfred* (1817)
SHELLEY		*The Cenci* (1820)
SHERIDAN KNOWLES		*William Tell* (1825)

CHAPTER VII

VICTORIAN DRAMA

I. Early Victorian Drama. At the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign the only theatres licensed for drama proper were the two to which Charles II granted a royal patent in 1660.[1] A number of minor theatres had sprung up, but these were limited to concerts, variety entertainments, and farces. It is obvious that there was bound to be overlapping, but 'legitimate'[2] drama was supposed to be confined to the protected theatres, while the minor theatres might perform anything but plays, and these too if they were accompanied by music. As the population of London increased, the three protected theatres were rebuilt and enlarged, so that only great productions could be performed in them; the minor theatres were chiefly small and intimate. Thus the 'patent' theatres found it increasingly difficult to meet expenses, and the minor ones rapidly improved, gradually encroaching on the 'legitimate' preserves—for the law was seldom enforced. In the midst of this chaos the Government, in 1843, suddenly removed the limitation, granting licences to all theatres for dramatic performances, but classifying music-halls and variety-houses as disorderly places. The result was still greater chaos, followed by a period of some twenty years' stagnation. Had the opportunity been seized to found a national theatre the high tradition of dramatic art which characterized the

[1] See p. 152.

[2] This expression is still used to distinguish complete dramas from variety entertainment.

theatre of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries might have been preserved, and might have proved an incentive to the newly liberated theatres and a stimulus to public taste. But all standards and discipline disappeared, the theatre sank low in public estimation, and between 1843 and 1860 no more playhouses were built, no play of considerable importance was produced, and neither dramatists nor actors found it possible to live upon their earnings.

Many types of play are to be found in the early Victorian theatre. It is obvious that conditions allowed of no experiment or idealistic effort on the part of either writers or managers; all that they could do was to provide what the public wanted. And what the public wanted was romantic plays (though tinged with a stronger element of realism than the sentimental plays of the preceding era), burlesque, and farce. There was almost no tragedy, and little high comedy or comedy of manners ;[1] not only was there no one to write such plays, but there was no demand for them.

The romantic plays were of several kinds. There were verse plays (chiefly imitations of Elizabethan drama), melodramas (both of the German 'blood and thunder' type and the new French historical melodrama), and a new kind of domestic drama, full of melodramatic incident and situation, but never highly characterized; to this last class belong rural, nautical, and racing plays. Few of these plays possessed any merit, and both they and their authors are in great measure forgotten. But there was one famous figure who stood at the centre of the romantic revival of this period, and that was the actor-manager William Charles Macready. He managed both Drury Lane and Covent Garden theatres, and did more than any man to encourage the composition and production of poetic plays. He produced three plays by Bulwer Lytton and two by Robert

[1] With the notable exception of Dion Boucicault's *London Assurance* (1841).

Browning, though he failed to make the latter a commercial success. Edward Bulwer Lytton was famous and successful for a time. Though his plays were sentimental and loaded with rhetoric, bad verse, and hackneyed situations they were full of life, and provided excellent acting-parts. Robert Browning was the antithesis of Lytton. We know from his poetry that he possessed just the qualities that Lytton lacked—acute sense of character, philosophy, and a sense of dramatic values; but he was unable to handle intrigue, and he lacked the sense of stagecraft. Though all his work is dramatic none of it is theatric. Several of his plays were performed, but none was successful. *Strafford*, a fine drama with obvious practical imperfections, was produced at Covent Garden in 1837, but it was soon taken off. A better play in technique, but less significant, is *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* (1843). *Pippa Passes* (1841) is really a closet drama, but is sometimes performed; it is full of dramatic possibilities and very beautiful.

The other famous Victorian poet, Alfred Tennyson, wrote for the theatre at the instigation of Irving, as Browning did at the request of Macready, but he had none of Browning's dramatic genius. He wrote a few short romantic plays and three historical tragedies, *Queen Mary* (1875), *Harold* (1876), and *Becket* (1884). There are some good scenes in the tragedies, and in the hands of Irving they made effective performances, but they are not remarkable plays.

The most healthy element in the early Victorian theatre was that of farce and burlesque. The one-act farce came into general use as a curtain-raiser, and in the seventies was expanded into five acts. The burlesques were superficial and sometimes in bad taste, but they were at all events alive, because they were based largely upon criticism of society and art. Everything was parodied—classical, Elizabethan, Continental, and contemporary drama. Farce meant to find the revered thing and laugh at it, to find the

accepted thing and deny it, to the accompaniment of puns, songs, dances, and high spirits. F. C. Burnand (editor of *Punch*) and H. J. Byron are two of the best known of the many authors of burlesque. The extravaganza, usually a dramatic treatment of a fairy legend, led to the institution of Christmas pantomimes, which still remain with many of their characteristic features, though the harlequinade and transformation scene are passing away.

II. Mid-Victorian Drama. Though it was still some years before the pall of dullness which hung over every department of the English theatre was lifted, after 1860 things took a turn for the better. Between this date and the end of the century the number of theatres was doubled, many writers with conspicuous ability and high ideals began to write for the theatre, and new ideas and methods appeared. For the first time the enormous social and artistic possibilities of the theatre were realized. The romantic play quickly grew unfashionable, as realism and novelty became the cardinal dramatic virtues. English drama, however, was steeped in romanticism, and as there was no playwright with sufficient technical skill to handle the new codes of the art the dramatists turned, as they had before under similar conditions, to France.

In the literature of the English Romantic Revival the work of Byron and Scott lifted the romantic idea out of the sphere of pure imagination, in which Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley moved, into that of human interest and adventure. In literature, especially in poetry, there is little doubt that most of us would give a good deal of Byron and Scott for a very little of the others, but in drama practical interest and incident are just what is needed, and in France (largely, indeed, owing to the influence of Scott) a similar change was taking place; the old sentimental drama was giving way to a new 'bravo' melodrama, intensely romantic, but centring round the actual adventures of a historical or

traditional character, such as Ruy Blas or the Count of Monte Cristo. (It is this kind of play that to-day forms the principal attraction in the cinemas.) Many such plays were adapted in England, and they supplied the characters and conventions for such melodramas as *The Lyons Mail* (played by Irving in 1871) and the numerous 'London' melodramas—e.g., *The Lights o' London*, by G. R. Sims (1881). This kind of play, with its conventional characters and situations, is still performed in the provinces by the humbler travelling companies. To us to-day the sentiment seems unreal and comic; but although these plays were morbid and artistically worthless they were based on contemporary English life, and were a direct step in the transition from early Victorian melodrama to the realism of to-day.

Among the early experimenters with the new type of play the most important were Tom Taylor, Dion Boucicault, and Tom Robertson. They all wrote plays of many different kinds, and translated, adapted, and experimented widely. None of Taylor's plays is particularly remarkable, and Boucicault too was a "journalist of the stage," who wrote for the appeal of the moment. Robertson's work, however, had more permanent value. For the first time in the plays of this period we find a literary quality, a personal note, and avoidance of the stagy dialogue and commonplace tricks and plots of the time. He was a keen student of character, an easy writer, and an independent and able craftsman—the first of the great dramatic craftsmen of the later nineteenth century. *David Garrick* (1864), *Society* (1865), and *Caste* (1867) have never entirely lost their popularity.

III. Late Victorian Drama. The last quarter of the nineteenth century is chiefly remarkable for improvements in technique, in both the writing and the production of plays. The Bancrofts had already done much at the Prince of Wales's Theatre by providing comfortable and attractive

conditions, carefully selecting their actors and paying them well, and insisting on precision and excellence in scenery, furniture, dresses, and such matters as adequate rehearsal; and in 1879 they went to the Haymarket, where they did even better work. Irving at the Lyceum, Mr and Mrs Kendal at the St James's, John Hare at the Court, and Charles Wyndham at the Criterion in a few years inaugurated new traditions of the best management and the best acting, and thus encouraged dramatists to original efforts and awakened public interest in those efforts. This activity, together with the dramatic criticism and constructive suggestions of Matthew Arnold, Clement Scott, William Archer, H. A. Jones, Mr Bernard Shaw, and Mr Gordon Craig, and the introduction (chiefly by Sir Edmund Gosse) of Ibsen to the English public, aroused intense interest in the new and undreamed-of possibilities of the theatre. By the end of the century the theatre had shown itself to be not merely a commercial organization for the provision of amusement, but in addition to this a powerful, perhaps the most powerful, public and articulate instrument for thinkers and reformers, social, political, religious, and artistic. Numbers of books and articles about the theatre appeared; amateur dramatic societies, organizations for the production of original plays, and dramatic schools sprang up, and even universities and academies awoke to the educational importance of the drama.

By this time the number of dramatists was so great that it is impossible to do more than select a few names and a few plays that seem to be most typical of the age and most important for their influence on the drama of recent years. William Schwenck Gilbert, Henry Arthur Jones, Arthur Wing Pinero, Oscar Wilde, and Stephen Phillips among them represent the principal tendencies of the late Victorian drama.

Gilbert is chiefly famous for his light-opera work in collaboration with Sullivan, but he wrote a number of

prose plays as well, of many different kinds. They are not very successful, however, and it was only in the musical play that his extraordinary ability was fully developed. He raised this kind of play from its position as the lowest type of drama to the most popular, and he did so by infusing it with his own cheerful, satirical, and intensely attractive personality. He drew his stories not from myth and legend, but from commonplace material, and he thus cleared the air of worn-out ideas with his renovating imagination, forcing people to make new standards for themselves by humorously turning everything upside down. In Sir Arthur Sullivan he found a musical collaborator who perfectly understood and interpreted his adroit skill in the manipulation of rime and rhythm. Gilbert's humour as well as his satire was topical, and to-day has lost much of its force; but his sure sense of the stage and Sullivan's admirable music resulted in dramatic works of art of such excellence that they are unlikely ever to lose their popularity.

H. A. Jones and Sir Arthur Pinero both excel in technique. Jones's plays, besides being written with remarkable appreciation of stage conditions, are in the direct line of high comedy and satire as found in the work of Congreve and Sheridan. He subordinates everything to sociological interest. All his plays are effective; the most representative of his different periods are probably *The Crusaders* (1891), *Mrs Dane's Defence* (1900), and *The Lie* (1915). His work on behalf of the drama, particularly in regard to copyright, censorship, and the organization of the theatre both within and without, is no less important than his plays. Sir Arthur Pinero's craftsmanship is even better than Jones's. He is, above all, a practical dramatist, never forgetting that he is writing for actors. It follows from this that his plays excel in characterization and dramatic incident; but in thought they are less subtle, and in sentiment they are sometimes unsympathetic to

modern ideas. They also suffer from an 'over-literary' tendency—his dialogue is often too well turned for speech. But his plays are always interesting, and in whatever form he writes he always shows the perfect adaptability of his powers to the best demands of his time. *Dandy Dick* (1887), a farce, *Sweet Lavender* (1888), *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893), and *Trelawny of the Wells* (1898) may be taken as fairly representative plays.

Oscar Wilde is in a class by himself. Of his five plays only *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895) has any claim to be called a good play, and even that needs modification on the stage; but as a stylist Wilde is supreme in his own kind. There is no spiritual power or doctrine in his work, but there is a lurking significance in all the nonsensical conversations and situations, and his plotting is admirable. The philosopher is there, but he is slave to the artist. His superficiality amounts to genius, and there has been no language, no epigram, no real comedy of artificiality like this since Congreve. But his wit, though brilliant, is cruel, and lacks the poetic depth and humanity of Congreve's, and his characterization and plotting are trivial. He had an acute sense of the theatre, but most of his plays are spoiled by the interpolation of serious sentimental passages; these, however, are conspicuously absent in *The Importance of Being Earnest*, where the situation is farcical throughout.

In 1900 Sir George Alexander commissioned Stephen Phillips to write him a tragedy in verse. As a result Phillips (already a famous poet) wrote several verse tragedies, the best known of which are *Herod* (1900), *Paolo and Francesca* (1901), and *Ulysses* (1902). These plays have been widely read, but did not achieve much success on the stage. Yet no one since the Elizabethans has combined so successfully the qualities of a true poet and a command of stage technique, and his plays, though apparently unsuited to the modern theatre, are very noteworthy achievements.

SWEET LAVENDER

Sir Arthur Wing Pinero

(1888)

Sir Arthur Pinero's plays depend for their effect chiefly upon plot, and it is therefore impossible to do justice to them by selection. The following abridgment of the first act of *Sweet Lavender*, however, gives a fair idea of the tone of late Victorian comedy and of the author's remarkable grasp of theatric effect.

Act I

The shabbily furnished sitting-room of some barristers' chambers in the Temple. Doors L. and R. leading to the bedrooms of RICHARD PHENYL *and* CLEMENT HALE. *Up R. is a curtained opening leading into a passage. The corresponding part of the room, where the windows look on to the court, forms a kind of recess curtained off from the rest. It is a bright spring morning.* RUTH ROLT, *a slim, delicate-looking woman of about thirty-five, with a sweet face and a soft voice, humbly but very neatly dressed, is laying the breakfast things upon the table. There is a knock on the door, and* RUTH *admits* DR DELANEY, *a genial old Irish gentleman with silvery-grey hair and whiskers.*

DELANEY. Thank ye—is it Mrs Rolt? I'm calling on Mr Hale.

RUTH. Yes, sir.

DELANEY. I'm Dr Delaney. I've just had the pleasure of seeing your daughter downstairs.

RUTH. My daughter?

DELANEY. The fact is, I'm a friend of Mr Hale's, and when I met him a night or two back, he told me that the child of his laundress was looking a little peaky, and that if ever I was near the Temple——

RUTH. Oh, how good of Mr Hale! And you too, Doctor.

DELANEY [*taking her two hands in his*]. Don't speak of it—not a bit. Mr Hale isn't out of his bed yet, I take it?

RUTH. Yes, Doctor, he'll breakfast in a minute.

[*Knocks at his door.*

DELANEY [*to himself*]. Now I wonder whether this boy is smitten with the bit of a girl downstairs. Ah, thank goodness it's no business of mine!

RUTH. Mr Hale!

CLEMENT [*in his room*]. Yes?

RUTH. Dr Delaney, please.

CLEMENT. Oh, thank you, I'm coming.

[RUTH *continues laying the table.*

RUTH. Don't you think my girl is looking very pale, Doctor?

DELANEY. Ah, don't worry yourself now. It's the air of the Temple. She's a white chrysanthemum instead of a pink one. Your daughter's strong enough.

RUTH. Bless you for telling me that! My sweet Lavender!

DELANEY. You're a widow, I'm sorry to hear, Mrs Rolt. Have you been alone a long while?

RUTH [*coldly*]. I lost Lavender's father before she was born.

DELANEY. Ah, that's a pity now.

RUTH. And she's all I have in the world, Doctor. In fact, she's myself. I feel her smile on my face, and the pains and aches I suffer go to her young bones. When she is poring over her lessons at night I am sure my eyes smart for it——

DELANEY. Her lessons? What lessons are those?

RUTH. She works hard with her books in the evening; Mr Hale has been good enough to help her.

DELANEY. Oh, has he? And she's very fond of her books—have ye noticed?

RUTH. Yes, very.

DELANEY. Then the only thing I've got to recommend is this—that ye'll put a stop to the lessons for six months or so.

RUTH. Very well, Doctor. Poor Lavvy!

DELANEY [*to himself*]. I've hit it! Oh, thank goodness, this is no business of mine!

Enter CLEMENT HALE. *He is a handsome, boyish young man of about three and twenty, immaculately attired in a fashionable dressing-suit*

CLEMENT. Why, Delaney, they call you a fashionable physician, and you're found in the City at ten in the morning.

DELANEY. Mee dear boy, Oi'll let you into a secret—we can't get human ailments to keep fashionable hours.

RUTH [*to* CLEMENT]. Dr Delaney has seen Lavender. I—I can't thank you.

CLEMENT [*smiling*]. Please, don't. [*With assumed carelessness*] What do you think of the child?

DELANEY [*hesitatingly*]. Oh, she's been increasing her knowledge a little too rapidly, that's all.

RUTH. Lavender has to give up her lessons for six months, the Doctor says. Isn't it a pity, Mr Hale? [*Exit* RUTH.

CLEMENT. Give up her lessons?

DELANEY. Now, it's no good overloading the brain of a young girl. Now, is it?

CLEMENT [*carelessly turning away*]. No, no.

DELANEY [*to himself*]. No, nor the heart neither. [*There is the sound of the fall of some heavy object in the adjacent room.*] What's that now?

CLEMENT. That? Oh, that's Dick.

DELANEY. Dick, is it?

CLEMENT. Mr Richard Phenyl, barrister-at-law. I share his chambers. Dick's dressing.

DELANEY. Dropped his waistcoat.

CLEMENT. Poor Dick! If you saw him, I dare say you'd be shocked at my making a companion of him. But I know what good there is in old Dick—I shall pull him round yet. Like to know him?

DELANEY. I loike to know everybody.

CLEMENT [*opening the door slightly*]. Dick! [*To* DELANEY] You won't see him to advantage. I was busy last night, and he ran off the rails a little. Dick!

[DICK PHENYL *enters and walks unsteadily towards* CLEMENT. *He is a shattered and dissolute-looking man of about five and forty, with shaggy iron-grey hair and ragged whiskers. He has a generally down-at-heel appearance, but presents the remains of a gentleman. Though eccentric, he is refined and good-humoured.*

DICK. Clemen', my boy—good mor'ing.

CLEMENT [*reproachfully*]. Hallo, Dick, hallo!

DICK. I know wha' you infer, Clemen'. But you're so unreasonable. I had an important appointment at the "Steak and Turbot," in Flee' Street—a very old-established inn, Clemen'—Doc'or Johnson, and all that sor' o' thing. I'm none the worse for it, Clemen'.

CLEMENT. Are you any the better?

DICK. I'm about the same.

CLEMENT. Let me introduce my friend, Dr Delaney.

DICK. Wha' nonsense—Doc'or Johnson.

[*Crosses to him, shakes hands, and sits on the sofa.*

DELANEY. Delighted to make your acquaintance, Mr Phenyl.

DICK. Than'g you. Were you here when you heard that noise in the next room?

DELANEY. I heard a noise.

DICK. The pattern on my berroom carpet—dam' 'noying. Trip up anybody.

DELANEY. I happen to have a little something in my pocket that'll pull him together.

CLEMENT. Give it him, for heaven's sake.

DELANEY. I want a tumbler.

[CLEMENT *gets him one, and he measures into it some drops from a phial he has taken from his pocket.*

DICK [*mystified*]. Perfec' conjuring-trick.

CLEMENT [*offering a carafe of water*]. Water?

DICK [*quickly*]. Ver' little!

[DELANEY *pours some water in, and gives it to* DICK.

DELANEY. Swallow that, now.

DICK. Not spirits, I hope, at this hour of the mor'ing?

DELANEY. No, no.

DICK [*annoyed*]. Why not?

DELANEY. Come, come, drink my health, sor.

DICK [*thickly*]. "The Queen!" [*He drinks, then coughs and splutters.*] Wants keeping another year at least. Oh!

[*He buries his head in his hands.*

DELANEY. He's all right. I'm off. [*Taking* CLEMENT's *hand*] God bless ye, mee boy.

CLEMENT. God bless *you*, Dr Delaney. I wish more of us were like you.

DELANEY. Go along, now. [*Looking at* CLEMENT, *then at* DICK] Ah, it's no business of mine.

[*He goes out.* DICK *rouses himself with a shake and a shiver, his drunkenness gone.*

DICK [*lifting up dish-cover*]. Clem—sweetbread—we haven't had breakfast. Clem!

CLEMENT [*drawing the curtain in front of the door*]. Hallo!

DICK [*severely*]. You're always late for breakfast, Clement.

CLEMENT [*sitting down and pouring out the tea*]. No appetite, I suppose?

DICK [*as if with a disagreeable taste in his mouth*]. H'm. I fancy my liver isn't as it should be.

CLEMENT. Ah, Dick, Dick, you've broken your word to me again.

DICK [*cheerfully*]. The last time, Clement, my boy—the last time.

CLEMENT. It's always the last time, Dick.

DICK [*irritably*]. Don't talk childishly. Last night was the last time—it will be the last time. You're invariably finding fault, Clement—it's discouraging. [*Pause.*] No, Clem; I'm sorry—there. I apologize. Never again. [*Holding out his hand*] Friends, Clement, my boy? Word of honour?

CLEMENT [*gripping his hand*]. Word of honour, Dick.

DICK. Done. But do try to *commend* a little more, Clement—to praise, to encourage. Much may be done by kindness. [*Cheerfully*] Sweetbread?

CLEMENT. No, thanks, Dick.

DICK. Off your feed? Spoonful of whisky in your tea—tone to the stomach.

CLEMENT. Dick, Delaney says that little Lavender Rolt ought to discontinue her studies. Confound it! When she is making such progress.

[*Goes to the writing-table and sits with his head in his hands.*

DICK. Hallo, Clement, my boy. [*Going over to him*] This won't do.

CLEMENT. What won't do?

DICK. D'ye think I haven't seen this coming on—your giving little Lavender hints in grammar and composition, in the dusk, by that window? No, no, my boy—for the sake of her peace of mind and your future, pull up before the mischief's done.

CLEMENT [*taking* DICK's *hand*]. You're too late, Dick: I love her.

DICK [*spluttering with anger*]. Out of my chambers! This is how you profit by the counsel and companionship of a man double your age. I've done with you.

CLEMENT. Very well, Dick.

DICK. Clement, my boy, I'm a little angry now, but [*tearfully*] I shall work round, Clem. You haven't breathed a word to the poor child, have you? [CLEMENT *shakes his head.*] Thank you, Clem. Lavvy must be sent into the country for the benefit of

her health, and then—there'll be an end of it. Besides, ain't you engaged to a beautiful Miss Thingamy—your guardian's niece?

CLEMENT. Minnie Gilfillian and I were thrown together as children, but I'm sure she troubles her pretty head very little about me. I can't stop the beating of my heart, Dick—and it beats Lavender, Lavender, Lavender, every moment of the day.

DICK. Clement, my boy. [*Filling his pipe*] The story of Cinderella hasn't been properly told yet. There was no pumpkin and no fairy. The girl was pretty and good, and he loved her, Clement, but the time arrived when the slippers were down at the heel, and had to be replaced by a size larger. And, by and by—it's a sad story—he noticed that her little sharp elbows didn't get any whiter, poor thing! and that she mixed up the first and third person in accepting Lady Montmorency's kind invitation to dine. And one day a carriage and pair were for sale, Clement, the property of a gentleman leaving England, who was no longer answerable for the debts contracted by Cinderella, his wife.

CLEMENT. The hero of your story was a cad, Dick.

DICK. The hero of any story generally is.

[*There is a knock at the door.*

CLEMENT [*angrily*]. There's that man of mine—he gets later every morning. Come in!

LAVENDER, *a slight pretty girl, about seventeen, shabbily dressed, enters. Her voice is sweet and gentle, her movements graceful and refined. She carries some school books and a tray.*

LAVENDER. May I clear the table, please? [*She puts the tray down and crosses to* CLEMENT.] You won't look at my exercise till I've cleared the table and gone right out of sight, will you?

[*She gives him the books reluctantly.*

CLEMENT. Why?

LAVENDER. It's so blotty.

DICK. H'm, Clement, my boy!

[*Waves his pipe at him.* LAVENDER *begins clearing.*

CLEMENT. Don't interfere, Dick. [*To* LAVENDER] May I help in some way?

LAVENDER. No, thank you.

[*She takes up some things and goes out.* CLEMENT *hesitates, then snatches up an egg-cup and follows her.* DICK *goes to the door.*

DICK. Ah, Clement, my boy.

[CLEMENT *returns, glaring at him, and goes and stands on the hearthrug.* LAVENDER *continues clearing.* DICK *throws himself on the sofa, and eyes the other two from behind a newspaper.*

CLEMENT. Do you know that your books are to be closed, Lavender?

LAVENDER. My books? [*Falteringly*] I was afraid I was becoming too troublesome to you, Mr Hale.

CLEMENT. My dear child, it's not my doing, but Dr Delaney's.

LAVENDER [*in tears*]. Oh, how cruel! He doesn't know how ignorant and stupid I am!

CLEMENT. But I've a capital notion. If you may not *read*, there's nothing to prevent your being *read to*.

DICK. Eh?

CLEMENT. And so, Lavender, every evening for a couple of hours I'll grind out some sound instructive work, and you shall sit and listen to me.

LAVENDER. Oh, Mr Hale, how good you are!

[*She has removed the white cloth, and is folding it.*

CLEMENT [*advancing*]. Allow me.

LAVENDER. Thank you, Mr Hale.

[CLEMENT *takes the other end of the cloth.* DICK *savagely rolls his paper into a ball and flings it away. There is a sharp knock at the door.*

DICK [*taking* LAVENDER'S *end of the tablecloth from her*]. Go to the door, Lavvy.

[LAVENDER *opens the door and admits* HORACE BREAM, *a good-looking young American.*

HORACE. Thank you—Mr Hale? You'll excuse me [*looking at* DICK]?

DICK [*dropping his end of the tablecloth*]. No—Phenyl!

HORACE [*to* CLEMENT]. Mr Hale, I'm perfectly delighted to make your acquaintance. Permit me to carry this through with you.

[*Placing his hat and stick on the floor, he picks up the end of the cloth and folds it with* CLEMENT, *who glares at him.* DICK *sits on the sofa chuckling.*

CLEMENT. Really, I haven't the pleasure of——

HORACE. Horace Pinkley Bream. I have the honour to be a

great personal friend of your aunt, Mrs Gilfillian, and her daughter Minnie. Sir, most charming ladies.

CLEMENT. Oh, pray sit down.

HORACE [*sitting*]. I'm in a very great hurry.

CLEMENT. Have you any message from——?

HORACE. No, sir, I have not. The fact is, your party picked me up in Paris two months ago.

CLEMENT. What party?

HORACE. Mr Wedderburn, his sister, Mrs Gilfillian, and her daughter. Sir, charming ladies. They just stuck to me right through. [*Looking round*] Sir, I am delighted with your apartments.

CLEMENT. You left my friends in France, I presume?

HORACE. No, sir, I brought Mrs Gilfillian and her daughter right through to London yesterday. Charming ladies.

CLEMENT [*under his breath*]. Confound it!

HORACE. We left Wedderburn in Paris, buying things. An exceedingly pleasant gentleman.

CLEMENT [*distractedly*]. And where are Mrs Gilfillian and her daughter now?

HORACE. That's my difficulty. I lost 'em at Charing Cross station last night. You have not seen Mrs Gilfillian yet?

CLEMENT. No, sir.

HORACE. Thank you; good morning. [*Presenting a card to* CLEMENT] You have not been on our side probably?

CLEMENT. No.

HORACE. Sir, you'll just love N'York. [*Shaking hands with* CLEMENT *warmly*] I regret that I am rather in a hurry. [*Handing a card to* DICK, *and shaking hands*] Sir, good morning. You'll hear from me the very moment I've discovered these charming ladies. [*He goes out quickly.*

DICK. Clement, my boy! Mrs Gilfillian and her daughter are in London! The hand of Fate!

CLEMENT. I shall be happy to see them, Dick, and to shake the hand of Fate. If I'm not in when they call, I'll be back in half an hour. I am going out to buy *Frederick the Great* to read to Lavender.

[*He goes into his bedroom.* DICK *goes over and looks at the books on the shelves.*

DICK. There's my little library! Well, if Cripps's pupil is

good for fifteen pounds, I'll lend 'em to Ruth Rolt, and Lavvy shall leave town.

Enter LAVENDER. *He begins taking down the books*

LAVENDER. May I help you, Mr Phenyl?

DICK. I'm sorting my property from Mr Hale's.

LAVENDER [*eagerly*]. Oh, let me do it! I'll look for Mr Hale's name! May I?

DICK. Very well, Lavvy. [*To himself*] I'll run over and see Cripps. Poor Lavvy! It's like setting her to sign her own death-warrant.

[*He goes into his bedroom.* CLEMENT, *dressed for walking, enters and watches her.*

CLEMENT [*to himself*]. She makes the room like a garden.

[*He silently draws the curtain in front of the door, without noticing that the door is open, and then goes to* DICK'S *door, listens, and turns the key.*

LAVENDER [*sitting down with a book*]. *Williams on the Law of Real Property*—Clement Hale. Ah! [*Opening the book in the middle*] "Incorporeal Hereditaments." What a beautiful book!

CLEMENT [*softly*]. Lavender!

[*With a cry of fright she turns and looks at him.*

LAVENDER. What are you doing there, Mr Hale?

CLEMENT. I've come to sit with you in the garden.

LAVENDER. The garden!

[*Staring at him, she tries to rise: he takes her hand.*

LAVENDER [*under her breath*]. Mr Hale!

CLEMENT [*drawing her down near him, and looking into her face earnestly*]. I love you, Lavender, with all my heart. Will you be my wife? [*She shrinks away, still staring at him.*] Speak to me. You don't mean no!

LAVENDER [*faintly*]. I don't know what I mean.

CLEMENT [*tenderly*]. Think about it—think about it—here.

[*He takes her in his arms.*

LAVENDER [*half crying*]. You oughtn't to love me!

CLEMENT. Why?

LAVENDER. You know, I'm not a lady; and I'm very poor.

CLEMENT. I'll be poor with you, if it comes to that.

LAVENDER. Are you poor?

CLEMENT [*thoughtfully*]. I may become very poor.

LAVENDER [*rising*]. Oh!

CLEMENT. Do you like me the less for that?

LAVENDER. Less! [*Checking herself*] I haven't said I like you at all, but if I ever did like you, it would be because I know *how* to be poor, and could teach you the way to bear it.

CLEMENT [*drawing her to him*]. My sweet, sweet Lavender! Tell me you love me.

LAVENDER. I never will. You make me say things, and then you laugh at me. [*Bending her head to his*] I love you.

[*The curtain in front of the doorway is pushed aside and* MRS GILFILLIAN *enters with* MINNIE. MRS GILFILLIAN *is an aristocratic-looking woman of about fifty,* MINNIE *a handsome, lively, young woman. On discovering* LAVENDER *on* CLEMENT'S *knee,* MRS GILFILLIAN *clutches* MINNIE *by the arm and takes her out. There is then a loud knock on the door.* CLEMENT *and* LAVENDER *rise quickly: she goes back to the books, and* CLEMENT *goes to the door and admits the ladies.*

CLEMENT. My dear aunt.

MRS GILFILLIAN [*giving* CLEMENT *two fingers*]. We found your door open, Clement, but I preferred knocking.

CLEMENT [*unhappily*]. Delighted, Aunt. [MRS GILFILLIAN *crosses to* LAVENDER, *and examines her through her pince-nez.*] Minnie.

MINNIE [*demurely*]. Well, Clem.

CLEMENT. This is a jolly surprise.

MINNIE [*looking at* LAVENDER]. M'yes. [LAVENDER *goes out.*

MRS GILFILLIAN [*looking after* LAVENDER]. That's a wicked young woman! [*She joins* CLEMENT, *as* MINNIE *looks round the room.*] Minnie and I have left Mr Wedderburn in Paris, for a week or two. [*Giving* CLEMENT *some photographs*] He sends you these portraits, done in Monte Carlo. [*Nervously*] Minnie, don't pry.

CLEMENT. Dear old guv'nor. The fact is, Aunt, I've already heard of your return from a Mr Bream.

MRS GILFILLIAN [*sinking into a chair*]. Oh!

MINNIE [*sitting on sofa*]. Oh, Ma!

MRS GILFILLIAN. We shall never shake him off. He saved Minnie's life in Paris, by pulling her from under a tramcar.

CLEMENT. Good gracious!

MRS GILFILLIAN. So careless of her to get there! This person

rushed forward and restored her to the sidewalk, as he will persist in calling the pavement. He's not at all the young man I would have selected to rescue a child of mine.

CLEMENT [*uneasily*]. In London for long, Aunt?

MRS GILFILLIAN. We have rooms at the Metropole. Oh, will you oblige me by taking a cab to the hotel, and asking my maid for my vinaigrette?

CLEMENT. Certainly.

[*He takes up his hat and umbrella, and goes out.* MRS GILFILLIAN *crosses to* MINNIE.

MRS GILFILLIAN. Minnie, my poor child. You saw that young woman? What were they doing? I have never felt my near sight so keenly.

MINNIE. Don't be cross, Ma, dear. She is very pretty and innocent-looking.

MRS GILFILLIAN. Innocent-looking! Do you think I will have my plans—Minnie! [*Suddenly*] Hush! [*The handle of* DICK's *room is rattled from inside.*] There's some one else in that room!

DICK [*within*]. Clement! Clement!

MRS GILFILLIAN [*listening*]. It's a man's voice—*or a deep contralto*!

DICK [*still within*]. Locked in, Clement, my boy. [MRS GILFILLIAN *turns the key and retreats.* DICK *enters in an old wig and gown.*] Thank you. To see Mr Hale?

MRS GILFILLIAN. I have seen Mr Hale. May I ask——?

DICK. Richard Phenyl. Hale and I live together.

MRS GILFILLIAN. Dear me! I wish to speak to you immediately. Mrs Gilfillian. My daughter.

DICK [*politely*]. Heard of you.

[MRS GILFILLIAN *motions* MINNIE *aside, and speaks confidentially to* DICK.

MRS GILFILLIAN. Mr Funnel, I have just received a great shock. We came in suddenly. A young woman was seated on Clement's knees, Mr Funnel. Ugh! What you tell me shall be in perfect confidence.

DICK. Not at all necessary. The young lady is the daughter of Mrs Rolt, who resides in the basement.

MRS GILFILLIAN. A common servant? A low woman?

DICK [*pointing downwards*]. Geographically, not otherwise. She is what I call a lady.

MRS GILFILLIAN. I'll see Mrs Rolt at once. Kindly ring the bell.

RUTH *enters*

DICK. Here is Mrs Rolt.

RUTH. Mr Bream, please.

HORACE [*entering quickly*]. My dear Mrs Gilfillian!

[MINNIE *rises in distress.*

MRS GILFILLIAN [*in consternation*]. Mr Bream!

HORACE [*excitedly*]. Lost you at the Custom House last night —saw you in a hansom this morning—never meant to rest till I'd found you. [*To* MINNIE] My dear Miss Gilfillian!

MRS GILFILLIAN [*sinking into a chair*]. Oh, dear me!

RUTH [*to* MRS GILFILLIAN]. You wish to speak to me, ma'am?

MRS GILFILLIAN. Yes. I have discovered that there have been some love-passages between Mr Hale and your daughter. I—I——

RUTH. Yes. My daughter has just told me that Mr Hale has offered her marriage. [*Tearfully*] It is a terrible shock to me to lose my child. [*She turns away.*

MRS GILFILLIAN. To lose your child. I see. [*To herself*] It's serious. I'll telegraph at once to brother Geoffrey.

[*She sits at writing-table, and begins writing.* RUTH'S *eye falls on the photographs: she stares at them for a moment blankly.*

RUTH [*commanding herself*]. Mr Phenyl. [*Pointing to the photograph*] Who—who is that?

DICK. Mr Wedderburn, I think.

RUTH. Wedderburn! [*After a pause she goes to* MRS GILFILLIAN *and whispers.*] Madam! Madam! You have misunderstood me. I—I give you my word of honour my daughter shall never marry Mr Hale.

MRS GILFILLIAN [*rising*]. What?

RUTH. Hush!

[*She glances round.* LAVENDER *enters from the passage, and takes up a tray.* CLEMENT *follows and stands whispering to her.* MINNIE *and* HORACE *are in close conversation as the curtain falls.*

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING EARNEST

Oscar Wilde

(1895)

Jack Worthing is guardian to Cecily Cardew, a girl of eighteen, who lives with her governess at his country house. To provide an excuse for constant visits to London, Jack has invented a scapegrace brother, Ernest, who lives in the Albany. In the person of Ernest he has become engaged to Gwendolyn Fairfax, and has now determined to kill off his imaginary brother, in spite of the difficulty of Gwendolyn's knowing him as Ernest. His friend Algernon Moncrieff, whose curiosity has been aroused by hearing of Jack's ward, Cecily, goes down to visit her, impersonating Jack's imaginary brother, Ernest. Jack arrives in deep mourning for his brother, quite unconscious that Algernon is in the house and has already successfully proposed to Cecily. He finds the Vicar, Dr Chasuble, calling on Miss Prism, the governess.

Act II

The garden at JACK WORTHING'S *country house. Basket chairs, books, etc.* MISS PRISM *and* DR CHASUBLE *are seated in conversation. Enter* JACK.

MISS PRISM. } Mr Worthing!
CHASUBLE. }

MISS PRISM. This is indeed a surprise. We did not look for you till Monday afternoon.

JACK [*shaking* MISS PRISM'S *hand in a tragic manner*]. I have returned sooner than I expected. Dr Chasuble, I hope you are well?

CHASUBLE. Dear Mr Worthing, I hope this garb of woe does not betoken some terrible calamity?

JACK. My brother.

CHASUBLE. Still leading his life of pleasure?

JACK [*restraining his sobs*]. Dead!

CHASUBLE. Your brother Ernest dead?

JACK. Quite dead.

CHASUBLE. A sad blow, Mr Worthing. Were you with him at the end?

JACK. No: he died abroad—in Paris, in fact. A severe chill, it seems.

MISS PRISM. As a man sows, so shall he reap.

CHASUBLE [*raising his hand*]. Charity, my dear Miss Prism, charity. None of us are perfect. I myself am particularly susceptible to draughts. Will the—interment—take place here?

JACK. No. He seems to have expressed a desire to be buried in Paris.

CHASUBLE. In Paris! [*Shakes his head.*] You would no doubt wish me to make some slight allusion to this tragic domestic affliction next Sunday. [JACK *presses his hand.*] My sermon on the meaning of the manna in the wilderness can be adapted to almost any occasion, joyful, or, as in the present case, distressing. I have preached it at harvest celebrations, christenings, confirmations, on days of humiliation and festal days.

JACK. Ah, that reminds me, you mentioned christenings I think, Dr Chasuble? I suppose you know how to christen all right. [CHASUBLE *looks astounded.*] I mean, of course, you are continually christening, aren't you?

CHASUBLE. It is one of my most constant duties in this parish. But is there any particular infant in whom you are interested, Mr Worthing? Your brother was, I believe, unmarried, was he not?

JACK [*mournfully*]. Oh, yes, quite unmarried.

MISS PRISM [*bitterly*]. People who live entirely for pleasure usually are.

JACK. But it is not for any child, dear doctor. I am very fond of children. No! The fact is, I would like to be christened myself this afternoon, if you have nothing better to do.

CHASUBLE. But surely, Mr Worthing, you have been christened already?

JACK. I don't remember anything about it. Of course, I don't know if you think I am a little too old now.

CHASUBLE. Not at all. The sprinkling, and, indeed, immersion of adults is a perfectly canonical practice. [JACK *shudders.*] At what hour would you wish the ceremony performed?

JACK. Oh, I might trot round about half-past five, if that would suit you.

CHASUBLE. Admirably! Admirably! And now, dear Mr Worthing, I will not intrude any longer into a house of sorrow——

Enter CECILY

CECILY. Uncle Jack! Oh, I am pleased to see you back. But what horrid clothes you have got on! Do go and change them.

[JACK *kisses her brow in a melancholy manner.*] What is the matter, Uncle Jack? Do look happy! You look as if you had toothache, and I have got such a surprise for you. Who do you think is in the dining-room? Your brother!

JACK. Who?

CECILY. Your brother Ernest. He arrived about half an hour ago.

JACK. What nonsense! I haven't got a brother.

CECILY. Oh, don't say that. However badly he may have behaved to you in the past, he is still your brother. I'll tell him to come out. [*She runs back into the house.*

CHASUBLE. These are very joyful tidings.

MISS PRISM. After we had all been resigned to his loss, his sudden return seems to me peculiarly distressing.

JACK. My brother in the dining-room? I don't know what it all means. I think it is perfectly absurd. [*Enter* CECILY *and* ALGERNON, *hand in hand.*] Good heavens! [*To* ALGERNON] Go away! Go away!

ALGERNON. Brother John, I have come down from London to tell you that I am very sorry for all the trouble I have given you, and that I intend to lead a better life in the future.

JACK. Go away!

CECILY. Uncle Jack, you are not going to refuse your own brother's hand?

JACK. Nothing will induce me to take his hand. I think his coming down here disgraceful. He knows perfectly well why.

CECILY. Uncle Jack, if you don't shake hands with Ernest, I will never forgive you.

JACK. Well, this is the last time I shall ever do it.

[*Shakes hands and glares.*

CHASUBLE. It's pleasant, is it not, to see so perfect a reconciliation? I think we might leave the two brothers together.

MISS PRISM. Cecily, you will come with us.

[*Exeunt all except* JACK *and* ALGERNON.

JACK. You young scoundrel, Algy, you must get out of this place as soon as possible.

Enter MERRIMAN, *the butler*

MERRIMAN. I have put Mr Ernest's things in the room next to yours, sir. I suppose that is all right.

JACK. What?

ALGERNON. I'm afraid I can't stay more than a week this time.

JACK. Merriman, order the dog-cart at once. Mr Ernest has been suddenly called back to town.

MERRIMAN. Yes, sir. [*Exit.*

ALGERNON. What a fearful liar you are, Jack. Jack, Cecily is a darling.

JACK. You are not to talk of Miss Cardew like that. I don't like it.

ALGERNON. Well, I don't like your clothes. You look perfectly ridiculous in them. Why on earth don't you go and change? It's perfectly childish to be in deep mourning for a man who is actually staying for a whole week with you in your house as a guest. I call it grotesque.

JACK. Well, will you go if I change my clothes?

ALGERNON. Yes, if you are not too long. I never saw anybody take so long to dress, and with such little result. [*Exit* JACK. *Enter* CECILY: *she does not see* ALGERNON, *who crosses and comes up behind her.*] Cecily!

Enter MERRIMAN

MERRIMAN. The dog-cart is waiting, sir.

ALGERNON. Tell it to come round next week, at the same hour.

MERRIMAN. Yes, sir. [*Exit.*

CECILY. Uncle Jack would be very much annoyed if he knew you were staying on till next week at the same hour.

ALGERNON. Oh, I don't care about Jack. What a perfect angel you are, Cecily!

CECILY. You dear romantic boy! You must not laugh at me, darling, but it has always been a girlish dream of mine to love some one whose name was Ernest. [ALGERNON *rises.*] There is something in that name that seems to inspire absolute confidence.

ALGERNON. But, my dear child, do you mean to say that you could not love me if I had some other name? Algernon, for instance.

CECILY. I might respect you, Ernest, I might admire your character, but I fear I should not be able to give you my undivided attention.

ALGERNON. Ahem! Cecily! [*Picking up his hat*] Your rector here is, I suppose, thoroughly experienced in the practice of all the rites and ceremonies of the Church?

CECILY. Oh, yes. Dr Chasuble is a most learned man.

ALGERNON. I must see him at once on a most important christening—I mean on a most important business. I'll be back in no time. [*Kisses her and rushes down the garden.*

CECILY. What an impetuous boy he is!

Enter MERRIMAN

MERRIMAN. A Miss Fairfax has just called to see Mr Worthing. On very important business, Miss Fairfax states.

CECILY. Isn't Mr Worthing in the library?

MERRIMAN. Mr Worthing went over in the direction of the Rectory some time ago.

CECILY. Pray ask the lady to come out here; Mr Worthing is sure to be back soon. And you can bring tea.

MERRIMAN. Yes, miss. [*Exit.*

CECILY. Miss Fairfax! I suppose one of the many good elderly women who are associated with Uncle Jack in some of his philanthropic work in London.

Enter MERRIMAN

MERRIMAN. Miss Fairfax. [*Enter* GWENDOLYN. *Exit* MERRIMAN.

CECILY. Pray let me introduce myself. My name is Cecily Cardew.

GWENDOLYN [*moving to her and shaking hands*]. Cecily Cardew! What a very sweet name! Something tells me we are going to be great friends. I like you already more than I can say.

CECILY. How nice of you to like me so much after we have known each other such a comparatively short time! Pray sit down.

GWENDOLYN [*still standing up*]. I may call you Cecily, may I not?

CECILY. With pleasure.

GWENDOLYN. And you will always call me Gwendolyn, won't you?

CECILY. If you wish.

GWENDOLYN. Then that is all quite settled, is it not?

CECILY. I hope so. [*They both sit down together.*

GWENDOLYN. Perhaps this might be a favourable opportunity for my mentioning who I am. My father is Lord Bracknell. You are here on a short visit, I suppose.

CECILY. Oh, no, I live here. I am Mr Worthing's ward.

GWENDOLYN. Oh! It is strange that he never mentioned to me that he had a ward. I am very fond of you, Cecily. But I am bound to state that now that I know that you are Mr Worthing's ward, I cannot help expressing a wish you were—well, just a little older than you seem to be—and not quite so very alluring in appearance. Ernest has a strong, upright nature. But even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others.

CECILY. I beg your pardon, Gwendolyn, did you say Ernest?

GWENDOLYN. Yes.

CECILY. Oh, but it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is my guardian. It is his brother—his elder brother.

GWENDOLYN. Ernest never mentioned to me that he had a brother. You are quite sure that it is not Mr Ernest Worthing who is your guardian?

CECILY. Quite sure. [*A pause.*] In fact, I am going to be his——

GWENDOLYN. I beg your pardon?

CECILY. Dearest Gwendolyn, Mr Ernest Worthing and I are engaged to be married.

GWENDOLYN [*quite politely, rising*]. My darling Cecily, I think there must be some slight error. Mr Ernest Worthing is engaged to me.

CECILY [*very politely, rising*]. I am afraid you must be under some misconception. Ernest proposed to me exactly ten minutes ago.

GWENDOLYN. It is certainly very curious, for he asked me to be his wife yesterday afternoon at five-thirty.

CECILY. It would distress me more than I can tell you, dear Gwendolyn, if it caused you any mental or physical anguish, but I feel bound to point out that since Ernest proposed to you he clearly has changed his mind.

GWENDOLYN [*meditatively*]. If the poor fellow has been entrapped into any foolish promise I shall consider it my duty to rescue him at once, and with a firm hand.

CECILY [*thoughtfully and sadly*]. Whatever unfortunate entanglement my dear boy may have got into, I will never reproach him with it after we are married.

GWENDOLYN. Do you allude to me, Miss Cardew, as an entanglement? You are presumptuous. On an occasion of this kind it

becomes more than a moral duty to speak one's mind. It becomes a pleasure.

CECILY. Do you suggest, Miss Fairfax, that I entrapped Ernest into an engagement? How dare you? This is no time for wearing the hollow mask of manners. When I see a spade I call it a spade.

GWENDOLYN. I am glad to say that I have never seen a spade.

Enter MERRIMAN, *to lay tea*

MERRIMAN. Shall I lay tea here as usual, miss?

CECILY [*sternly, in a calm voice*]. Yes, as usual.

[*He does so.* CECILY *and* GWENDOLYN *glare at each other.*

CECILY. May I offer you some tea, Miss Fairfax?

GWENDOLYN [*with elaborate politeness*]. Thank you. [*Aside*] Detestable girl! But I require tea!

CECILY. Sugar?

GWENDOLYN. No, thank you. Sugar is not fashionable any more. [CECILY *puts in four lumps.*

CECILY. Cake or bread and butter?

GWENDOLYN. Bread and butter, please. Cake is rarely seen in the best houses nowadays.

CECILY [*cutting a very large slice of cake and putting it on a plate*]. Hand that to Miss Fairfax.

[MERRIMAN *does so and goes out.* GWENDOLYN *drinks the tea, and makes a grimace. Puts down cup, reaches out for her bread and butter, and finds it is cake. Rises in indignation.*

GWENDOLYN. You have filled my tea with lumps of sugar, and though I asked most distinctly for bread and butter, you have given me cake. I warn you, Miss Cardew, you may go too far. From the first moment I saw you I distrusted you.

Enter JACK

GWENDOLYN. Ernest! My own Ernest!

JACK. Gwendolyn! Darling! [*Offers to kiss her.*

GWENDOLYN. A moment! May I ask if you are engaged to be married to this young lady?

JACK. To dear little Cecily? Of course not!

GWENDOLYN. Thank you. You may!

[*Offers her cheek, and* JACK *kisses her.*

CECILY. I knew there must be some misunderstanding, Miss Fairfax. That is Mr John Worthing, my guardian. [*Enter* ALGERNON.] Here is Ernest.

ALGERNON [*going straight to* CECILY *without noticing anyone else*]. My own love! [*Offers to kiss her.*

CECILY. A moment, Ernest! May I ask you—are you engaged to be married to this young lady?

ALGERNON [*looking round*]. To what young lady? Gwendolyn! Of course not!

CECILY. Thank you. You may.

[*Offers her cheek, and* ALGERNON *kisses her.*

GWENDOLYN. I felt there was some slight error, Miss Cardew. That is my cousin, Mr Algernon Moncrieff.

CECILY. Oh! [*Breaking away.*] Are you called Algernon?

ALGERNON. I cannot deny it. [*The two girls go to each other.*

GWENDOLYN. Is your name really John?

JACK. I could deny it if I liked. I could deny anything if I liked. But my name certainly is John. It has been John for years.

CECILY [*to* GWENDOLYN]. A gross deception has been practised on both of us.

GWENDOLYN. My poor wounded Cecily! Mr Worthing, there is just one question I would like to be permitted to put to you. Where is your brother Ernest? We are both engaged to be married to your brother Ernest, so it is a matter of some importance to us to know where your brother Ernest is at present.

JACK [*slowly*]. Gwendolyn—Cecily—it is very painful for me to be forced to speak the truth. However, I will tell you quite frankly that I have no brother Ernest. I have no brother at all. I never had a brother in my life, and I certainly have not the smallest intention of ever having one in the future.

CECILY. No brother at all?

JACK [*cheerily*]. None!

GWENDOLYN. Had you never a brother of any kind?

JACK [*pleasantly*]. Never. Not even of any kind.

GWENDOLYN. I am afraid it is quite clear, Cecily, that neither of us is engaged to be married to anyone. Let us go into the house. They will hardly venture to come after us there.

[*Exeunt* GWENDOLYN *and* CECILY.

JACK. How you can sit there calmly eating muffins when we

are in this terrible trouble, I can't make out. You seem to me to be perfectly heartless.

ALGERNON. Well, I can't eat muffins in an agitated manner. The butter would probably get on my cuffs. One should always eat muffins quite calmly. It is the only way to eat them.

JACK. I say it is perfectly heartless your eating muffins at all, under the circumstances.

ALGERNON. When I am in trouble, eating is the only thing that consoles me. Besides, I am particularly fond of muffins.

JACK. Well, that is no reason why you should eat them all in that greedy way. [*Takes muffins from* ALGERNON.

ALGERNON [*offering cake*]. I wish you would have cake instead. I don't like cake.

JACK. Good heavens! I suppose a man may eat his own muffins in his own garden.

ALGERNON. But you have just said it was perfectly heartless to eat muffins.

JACK. I said it was perfectly heartless of you, under the circumstances. That is a very different thing.

ALGERNON. It may be, but the muffins are the same.

[*He seizes the muffins from* JACK, *and gives him the cake.*

JACK. Algy, I wish you would go.

ALGERNON. I cannot. I have just made arrangements with Dr Chasuble to be christened at a quarter to six under the name of Ernest.

JACK. My dear fellow, the sooner you give up that nonsense the better. I myself have made arrangements to be christened at five-thirty, and I naturally will take the name of Ernest. We can't both be christened Ernest. It's absurd. Besides, I have a perfect right to be christened if I like. It is extremely probable that I never was christened. You have been christened already.

ALGERNON. Yes, but I haven't been christened for years.

JACK. Yes, but you have been christened. That is the important thing.

ALGERNON. Quite so, so I know my constitution can stand it. If you are not quite sure about your having been christened, I must say I think it is rather dangerous your venturing on it now. It might make you very unwell.

JACK. Oh, that is nonsense. You are always talking nonsense.

ALGERNON. Jack, you are at the muffins again! I wish you

wouldn't. [*Takes them.*] I told you I was particularly fond of muffins.

JACK. Algernon! I have already told you to go. I don't want you here. Why don't you go?

ALGERNON. I haven't quite finished my tea yet.

[*Takes* JACK's *cup of tea, and drinks it;* JACK *groans and sinks into a chair.*

PAOLO AND FRANCESCA

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

(1901)

"The scene is a gloomy hall in the Malatesta Castle at Rimini, hung with weapons and instruments of the chase; guests and citizens assembled, with soldiers, huntsmen, and retainers; hounds held in leash. As the scene opens a trumpet is blown outside. Enter Giovanni hurriedly down a gallery to the hall with papers in his hands. He pauses on the steps." It is not necessary to reproduce the setting implied exactly, but it should be easy to give the impression required. Costumes should be medieval, but this is not essential.

ACT I

GIOVANNI. Peace to this house of Rimini henceforth!
Kinsmen, although the Ghibelline is fallen,
And lies out on the plains of Trentola,
Still have we foes untrampled, wavering friends.
Therefore, on victory to set a seal,
To-day I take to wife Ravenna's child,
Daughter of great Polenta, our ally;
Between us an indissoluble bond.
Deep in affairs, my brother I despatched,
My Paolo—who is indeed myself—
For scarcely have we breathed a separate thought—
To bring her on the road to Rimini.

[*A noise of falling chains is heard.*

I hear them at the gates; the chains have fallen.

[*The doors at the end of the gallery are thrown open. Enter out of sunlight* PAOLO, *leading* FRANCESCA *by the hand, followed by ladies and squires. Flowers are thrown over them.* FRANCESCA *bows low to* GIOVANNI, *who raises her up.*

Rise up, Francesca, and unveil your face.

[*He kisses her on the forehead.*

Kinsmen, and you that follow with my bride,
You see me beat with many blows, death-pale
With gushing of much blood, and deaf with war—
You see me, and I languish for a calm.
I ask no great thing of the skies ; I ask
Henceforth a quiet breathing, that this child,
Hither all dewy from her convent fetched,
Shall lead me gently down the slant of life.
Here then I sheathe my sword ; and fierce must be
That quarrel where again I use the steel.

[*A murmur of approbation. He turns to* FRANCESCA.

Tell me, Francesca ; can you be content
To live the quiet life which I propose?
Where, though you miss the violent joys of youth,
Yet will I cherish you more carefully
Than might a younger lover of your years.

FRANCESCA. My lord, my father gave me to you ; I
Am innocent as yet of this great life ;
My only care to attend the holy bell,
To sing and to embroider curiously :
And as through glass I view the windy world.
Sweet is the stillness you ensure to me,
And if at any time I seem to offend you,
Will you impute it to my youth? But I
Shall never fail in any duty willingly.

GIOVANNI. I like that coldness in you, my Francesca,
And to my cousin I will make you known.
Widowed and childless, she has ruled till now
This fort of soldiers, a rough hostelry,
Which henceforth is your home ; since I remember
She was my friend ; has often cooled a rashness,
Which I inherit : lean at first on her.

[*Presents her to* LUCREZIA.

LUCREZIA. Francesca, as your husband says, we two
Have long been friends ; but friendship faints in love,
And since through inexperience you may err,
My place is near you ; to advise and guide
Suits with my years.

GIOVANNI. Friends, you will go with us to church: till then
Walk where you please—yet one word more—be sure
That, though I sheathe the sword, I am not tamed.
What I have snared, in that I set my teeth
And lose with agony; when hath the prey
Writhed from our mastiff fangs?
LUCREZIA. Giovanni, loose
Francesca's hands—the tears are in her eyes.
GIOVANNI. Well, well, till church-time then. Paolo, stay!
[*Exeunt* LUCREZIA, *guests, and retainers.* NITA *and attendant ladies remain in the background.* GIOVANNI, PAOLO, *and* FRANCESCA *come down.*
These delegates from Pesaro, Francesca,
Expect my swift decision on the tax.
Then will you think me negligent or cold
If to my brother I confide you still,
A moment—and no more? [*Exit* GIOVANNI.
FRANCESCA. O, Paolo,
Who were they that have lived within these walls?
PAOLO. Why do you ask?
FRANCESCA. It is not sign nor sound;
Only it seemeth difficult to breathe;
It is as though I battled with this air.
PAOLO. You are not sad?
FRANCESCA. What is it to be sad?
Nothing hath grieved me yet but ancient woes,
Sea-perils, or some long-ago farewell,
Or the last sunset-cry of wounded kings.
I have wept but on the pages of a book,
And I have longed for sorrow of my own.
PAOLO. Come nothing nearer than such far-off tears
Or peril from the pages of a book;
And, therefore, sister, am I glad that you
Are wedded unto one so full of shelter.
Constant is he, and steel-true till the grave.
For me—to-night I must be gone.
FRANCESCA. To-night!
Ah, Paolo, go not away so soon!
You brought me hither—leave me not at once,
Not now——

PAOLO. Francesca!
FRANCESCA. I am still a child.
I feel that to my husband I could go
Kiss him good-night, or sing him to his sleep,
And there an end.
PAOLO. Sister, I would that I——
FRANCESCA. Can we not play together a brief while?
Stay, then, a little! Soon I shall be used
To my grave place and duty—but not yet.
Stay, then, a little!
PAOLO. Here my brother comes.

Enter GIOVANNI

GIOVANNI. Stand either side of me—you whom I love.
I'd have you two as dear now to each other
As both of you to me. We are, Francesca,
A something more than brothers—fiercest friends;
Any that came between us I would kill.
FRANCESCA. Sir, I will love him: is he not my brother?
[NITA *advances, with ladies*
NITA. My lady, it draws late.
GIOVANNI. Go with her, child.
[*Exeunt* FRANCESCA, NITA, *and ladies*
GIOVANNI. You have set a new seal on an ancient love,
Bringing this bride.
PAOLO. And having brought her, here
My office ends. I'll say farewell to-night.
GIOVANNI. I do not understand.
PAOLO. Brother, believe
I do not hasten thus without deep cause.
GIOVANNI. Is there such haste indeed?
PAOLO. Such haste indeed!
GIOVANNI [*taking his hand*]. Come, Paolo, we two have never held
A mystery between us—tell me out!
What is the special reason of your going?
PAOLO. The troop for Florence which I mustered here
Should spur at daybreak.
GIOVANNI. There is no such haste.
What are you holding from me?
PAOLO. Ah, enough!

GIOVANNI. What sudden face hath made this hall so dark?
Come, then, 'tis natural—walk to and fro
And tell me—ah! some lady you beheld
There at Ravenna in Francesca's train!
PAOLO. No woman, brother, draws me from this house.
GIOVANNI. You like not then my marriage! But indeed,
No marriage can dissolve the bond between us.
PAOLO. Brother, 'tis nothing that hath chanced, but rather
That which may chance if I am here detained.
GIOVANNI. Darker and yet more dark. Now speak it out.
PAOLO. I cannot.
GIOVANNI. Paolo, this is an ill
Beginning of my marriage, and I loathe
That you should put me off. We three, I thought—
We three together—tempt me not to rage!
And as your elder I command your stay.
PAOLO. Giovanni, 'tis enough, I stay. Forgive me.
GIOVANNI. Brother, this is our first and last dispute.
Now leave me to these papers. [PAOLO *is going.*] Paolo,
You go with me heart-whole into this marriage?
Give me your hand again!
PAOLO. There is my hand.
[*Exit.* GIOVANNI *unfolds papers and reads.*
GIOVANNI. "In Pesaro sedition! Andrea Sarti
Is urgent——"

Lucrezia has warned Giovanni that Paolo is in love with Francesca. Giovanni and Paolo have both gone off to the war, but Paolo's love is too strong for him, and he returns. Giovanni also returns unexpectedly, having given out that he will be away for some time.

ACT III, SCENE III

The scene is an arbour in the castle gardens. Dawn is beginning to break. Enter FRANCESCA *with a book*, NITA *following.*

FRANCESCA. I cannot sleep, Nita; I will read here.
Is it dawn yet? [NITA *sets the lamp down.*
NITA. No, lady, yet I see
A flushing in the east.
FRANCESCA. How still it is!

NITA. This is the stillest time of night or day.
FRANCESCA. Know you why, Nita?
NITA. No, my lady.
FRANCESCA. Now
Day in a breathless passion kisses night,
And neither speaks.
NITA. Shall I stay here?
FRANCESCA. Ah, no!
Perhaps in the dawn silence I shall drowse.
If not, I'll read this legend to myself.
NITA. Is it a pretty tale?
FRANCESCA. Pretty? Ah, no!
Nita; but beautiful, and passing sad.
NITA. I love sad tales; though I am gay, I love
Sometimes to weep. But is it of our time?
FRANCESCA. It is an ancient tale of two long dead.
NITA. O, 'tis a tale of love!
FRANCESCA. Of love indeed.
But, Nita, leave me to myself: I think
I would have no one stirring near me now. [*Exit* NITA.
The light begins, but he is far away. [*She walks to and fro.*
Better than tossing in that vacant room
Is this cool air and fragrance ere the dawn. [*Begins to read.*

Enter PAOLO

PAOLO. Francesca!
FRANCESCA. Paolo! I thought you now
Gone into battle dim, far, far away.
PAOLO. And seems it strange that I should come then?
FRANCESCA. No,
It seems that it could not be otherwise.
PAOLO. I went indeed, but some few miles from hence
Turned, and could go no further. All this night
About the garden have I roamed and burned.
And now, at last, sleepless and without rest,
I steal to you.
FRANCESCA. Sleepless and without rest!
PAOLO. It seemed that I must see your face again
And then no more; that I must touch your hand
Once. No one stirs within the house; no one

In all this world but you and I, Francesca.
We two have to each other moved all night.
FRANCESCA. I moved not to you, Paolo.
PAOLO. But night
Guided you on, and onward beckoned me.
What is that book you read? Now fades the last
Star to the East: a mystic breathing comes:
And all the leaves once quivered, and were still.
FRANCESCA. It is the first, the faint stir of the dawn.
PAOLO. So still it is that we might almost hear
The sigh of all the sleepers in the world.
FRANCESCA. And all the rivers running to the sea.
PAOLO. What is't you read?
FRANCESCA. It is an ancient tale.
PAOLO. Show it to me.
FRANCESCA. It is the history
Of two who fell in love long years ago;
And wrongly fell.
PAOLO. How wrongly?
FRANCESCA. Because she
Already was a wife, and he who loved
Was her own husband's dear familiar friend.
PAOLO. Was it so long ago?
FRANCESCA. So long ago.
PAOLO. Shall I read on to you where you have paused?
FRANCESCA. Here is the place: but read it low and sweet.
Put out the lamp! [PAOLO *puts out the lamp.*
PAOLO. The glimmering page is clear.
[*Reading*] "Now on that day it chanced that Lancelot,
Thinking to find the king, found Guenevere
Alone; and when he saw her whom he loved,
Whom he had met too late, yet loved the more,
Such was the tumult at his heart that he
Could speak not, for her husband was his friend,
His dear familiar friend: and they two held
No secret from each other until now;
But were like brothers born——" My voice breaks off.
Read you a little on.
FRANCESCA [*reading*]. "And Guenevere,
Turning, beheld him suddenly whom she

Loved in her thought, and even from that hour
When first she saw him; for by day, by night,
Though lying by her husband's side, did she
Weary for Lancelot, and knew full well
How ill that love, and yet that love how deep!"
I cannot see—the page is dim: read you.

PAOLO [*reading*]. "Now they two were alone, yet could not speak;
But heard the beating of each other's hearts.
He knew himself a traitor but to stay,
Yet could not stir: she pale and yet more pale
Grew, till she could no more, and smiled on him.
Then when he saw that wishèd smile, he came
Near to her and still near, and trembled; then
Her lips all trembling kissed."

FRANCESCA. Ah, Lancelot! [*He kisses her.*

The next scene should follow directly on the preceding one. Setting as in Act I.

Act IV

LUCREZIA. O, he is subtly hidden—and where?—and where?
I have set that on which now I cannot stay.
[*Calling*] Nita! [*Enter* NITA.] You are alone! Where is your mistress?

NITA. I cannot tell, my lady.

LUCREZIA. Where is Lord Malatesta?

NITA. Know you not
He hath ridden off to the camp?

LUCREZIA. But might return!

NITA. There would be noise and stir at his return.

LUCREZIA. You have heard no sound? Remember fiercely! Nothing?
Not even a soft step?

NITA. I am faint with fear. [*She staggers.*

LUCREZIA [*seizing her hand*]. Which way went they, these two?

NITA. I cannot tell.

LUCREZIA. This door is fast! Then through the curtains?

NITA. Yes.

LUCREZIA. They seem to tremble still! Come with me, quick!
NITA. I am faint.
LUCREZIA. Come with me. [*She drags her to the curtain.*] Ah! Whose hand is that?

[GIOVANNI, *parting the curtains from the other side, comes slowly through.*

NITA. O, sir! We had not thought you back so soon.
GIOVANNI. Where is your mistress?
NITA. Sir, I cannot tell.
GIOVANNI. Is it not time you dressed her all in white,
And combed out her long hair as for a sleep?
NITA. 'Tis past the hour.
GIOVANNI. Well, leave us: when your mistress
Is ready, I will call for you. [*Exit* NITA.

[*There is a pause, in which* LUCREZIA *and* GIOVANNI *gaze at each other.*

LUCREZIA [*going slowly up to him*]. O, sir!
I would beseech of you—— [*She starts.*] Ah! Giovanni,
You have hurt your hand: there's blood upon it here.
GIOVANNI. 'Tis not my blood!
LUCREZIA. O, then——
GIOVANNI. "O, then!" is all.
[*As in a frenzy*] And now their love that was so secret close
Shall be proclaimed. Tullio, Carlo, Biagi!—
They shall be married before all men. Nita!
Rouse up the house, and bring in lights, lights, lights!
There shall be music, feasting and dancing.
Wine shall be drunk. Candles, I say! More lights!

[*All this while servants and others, half dressed, are continually rushing in with lights and torches. They stand whispering.*

Carlo, go through the curtains, and pass in
To the great sleeping-chamber: you shall find
Two there together lying: place them, then,
Upon some litter and have them hither brought
With ceremony. [*Exeunt* CARLO *and four servants.*] The curse, the curse of Cain!
A restlessness has come into my blood,
And I begin to wander from this hour
Alone for evermore.

LUCREZIA [*rushing to him*]. Giovanni, say
Quickly some light thing, lest we both go mad!
GIOVANNI. Be still! A second wedding here begins,
And I would have all reverent and seemly:
For they were nobly born, and deep in love.
[*Enter servants, bearing in* PAOLO *and* FRANCESCA *dead upon a litter.*
LUCREZIA. Ah! ah! ah!
GIOVANNI. Break not out in lamentation!
[*A pause. The servants set down the litter.*
LUCREZIA [*going to the litter*]. I have borne one child, and she has died in youth!
GIOVANNI [*going to the litter*]. Not easily have we three come to this—
We three who now are dead. Unwillingly
They loved, unwillingly I slew them. Now
I kiss them on the forehead quietly.
[*He bends over the bodies and kisses them on the forehead. He is shaken.*
LUCREZIA. What ails you now?
GIOVANNI. She takes away my strength.
I did not know the dead could have such hair.
Hide them. They look like children fast asleep!
[*The bodies are reverently covered over.*

The following plays are recommended for study:

BULWER LYTTON, *The Lady of Lyons* (1837).
ROBERT BROWNING, *Strafford* (1837); *Pippa Passes* (1841); *A Blot on the 'Scutcheon* (1843).
DION BOUCICAULT, *London Assurance* (1841).
TOM ROBERTSON, *Caste* (1867).
SIR A. W. PINERO, *Dandy Dick* (1887); *Sweet Lavender* (1888); *The Second Mrs Tanqueray* (1893); *Trelawny of the Wells* (1898).
H. A. JONES, *The Crusaders* (1891); *Mrs Dane's Defence* (1900); *The Lie* (1915).
OSCAR WILDE, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895).
STEPHEN PHILLIPS, *Paolo and Francesca* (1901); *Ulysses* (1902).

CHAPTER VIII

TWENTIETH-CENTURY DRAMA

I. The Condition of the Theatre of To-day. For the last thirty years public interest in the drama has been steadily increasing, and this dramatic revival seems not yet to have reached its climax. The output of plays during the first quarter of this century has been enormous, and the number of clever, interesting, beautiful, amusing, and original plays (and these of a really high quality) has never been equalled in any age. But there has not been a single great play. There have been brilliant critics of life, and writers with exquisite imagination; there have been many dramatists who have mastered the technique of their craft, and have also possessed unusual gifts of invention, expression, characterization, and so forth—but there has been no supreme dramatist—no master-creator with the power not only of representing and criticizing life, whether real or ideal, but of interpreting it. The drama is in a state of anarchy; there is no standard by which a modern play can be valued. It is an age of vital experiment, which is leading to developments which at present we cannot foresee, because no writer has yet arisen great enough to give them form.

To recognize the existence of this acute experimental activity and interest, it is necessary to realize that in the vast and complicated organization of the theatrical world of to-day there is a clearly marked division between the popular or commercial theatre and the intellectual or free theatre. To a certain extent they overlap; some of our

most able dramatists write for the popular theatre, and some of the most intellectual plays have unexpectedly proved popular. But speaking generally it is true to say that the play that pays best is not the best play. The commercial theatre of to-day is an enormous pleasure-providing organization; farce and melodrama and variety-shows still pay their way; musical comedies abound, though the revue,[1] the offspring of the musical comedy and the music-hall, now occupies the first place in popular affection; cabarets and entertainers divert a considerable part of the theatre-going public; opera, though it does not pay, is firmly established with a regular *clientèle*; and the cinema claims its thousands daily. The public left over for 'legitimate' drama is comparatively small, and its tastes are completely baffling. There is no manager in London who can predict with certainty what will prove a success in a West End theatre; costs of production are high, and the financial risk is tremendous. It is therefore clear that the commercial theatre affords the worst possible opportunity for experiment and for originality to the dramatist, the producer, and the actor. This has become increasingly obvious during the last thirty years, and has resulted in the steady growth of producing-societies, repertory companies, and private and amateur theatres and clubs of every kind. The chief activities of these organizations have been to revive the best plays of Elizabethan and Restoration times, and to perform the most notable foreign plays and original plays by English dramatists both known and unknown, such as could never have been undertaken by a manager catering for the ordinary theatre-going public. As early as 1890 Sir Herbert Tree set aside Monday nights, and afterward *matinées*, for the performance of experimental pieces, a

[1] The revue, and also organizations such as "The Follies," have kept alive the spirit of burlesque, which, as we have seen, has always been a healthy characteristic of the English stage and has produced much excellent entertainment.

practice which was adopted by other managers; and in 1904 he founded the Academy of Dramatic Art for the training of actors, producers, writers, and costumers. In 1891 Mr J. T. Grein organized the Independent Theatre, which produced, among others, plays by Ibsen, Mr George Moore, and Mr Bernard Shaw. Out of this grew the Stage Society, which ever since 1904 has produced from four to six new plays annually. Similar organizations are the Play-actors, the Pioneer Players, the Fellowship of Players, the Three Hundred Club, the Elizabethan Stage Society, the Greek Play Society, the Renaissance Theatre, and many others. Amateur societies, particularly those at the universities and in connexion with great industries or professions such as the Stock Exchange, are doing most interesting and valuable work of a similar kind. Mr Masefield has built a theatre in his garden. Organizations such as the Drama League and the Village Drama Society are helping to open the eyes of schools and institutions to the tremendous social and educational value of the drama. The Labour Party has its own dramatic organization under the direction of Mr Miles Malleson. Summer Schools, the classes in connexion with the Workers' Educational Association, and the University Extension movement clamour for lectures on the drama. But interest in the best drama, old and new, is not confined to the free theatre; the spirit of enterprise is alive in the public and professional world as well. The "Old Vic," besides its operatic work, has produced during the last few years all of Shakespeare's plays and a number of other classical plays, to crowded houses at popular prices; and it is now proposed to rebuild Sadler's Wells theatre for an extension of this work. The revivals of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century drama at Hammersmith, the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre at Stratford-on-Avon, Mr Nugent Monk's Elizabethan theatre at Norwich, and Mr Rutland Boughton's medieval drama at Glastonbury

are other evidences of lively public interest in the best drama of the past. The repertory movement, started by Sir Frank Benson at the Lyceum and by Mr Granville Barker and Mr J. E. Vedrenne at the Court theatre, has never been successful for long in London, but Sir Frank Benson and Mr Ben Greet have toured in repertory with success, and the repertory theatres at Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham have done invaluable work not only in taking the best plays to the provinces, but in bringing many excellent plays to London which would otherwise never have come there. More provincial repertory theatres are making their appearance. New plays are often tried out at small London suburban theatres before being taken to the West End; the Barnes theatre and the Everyman at Hampstead are utilized in this way, and the "Q" theatre has recently been opened for a similar purpose. But the most significant modern development has been the establishment of the Irish literary theatre at Dublin. It was founded in 1899, not by producers, but by writers (Mr W. B. Yeats, Mr George Moore, J. M. Synge, and Lady Gregory) who, besides possessing very high ability, were in close touch with Irish character, problems, and aspirations, and had intimate knowledge and understanding of the beautiful Irish mythology and romantic tradition. The light of the Irish theatre already shines far beyond its own land.

The keynote of most of the literature and drama of our own times is realism, or, as it is sometimes called, naturalism —that is, an attempt to exhibit and discuss social problems by representing life as it actually exists in its most significant aspects and allowing events to develop to their logical conclusions, instead of employing romantic themes and characters and happy endings. This is largely a natural reaction from the accumulated sentimentality of the nineteenth century, and was already noticeable at the end of the

century in the books of men such as Samuel Butler and Mr George Moore, and in the social dramas of Sir Arthur Pinero and H. A. Jones; but the realistic impetus in the drama was undoubtedly derived chiefly from the plays of Ibsen. Ibsen's fearless insistence on unflinching honesty and frankness, his development of themes hitherto proscribed, his amazing power of analysis, and his remarkable facility in dramatic construction and stage technique initiated a movement of emancipation and revolution in the drama all over the civilized world. Satire is always to be found in a society that has become over-civilized, and it is likely to continue as a marked feature of modern drama. Contemporary with this realistic drama in origin there is clearly to be seen a strain of revolt—imaginative, romantic, and making increasing use of symbolism [1]—a new romance, unsentimental and founded on intellectualism, and quite different from the romantic drama of any preceding age. The larger part of modern drama moves within the limits of these two forces; and whether his ideas are worked out in the sphere of the real or the ideal, whether his characters are of yesterday, to-day, the future, or of no time at all, the modern dramatist is concerned more than ever before with the problem of human existence and destiny.

II. The Realist School. The most representative dramatist of early twentieth-century thought is Mr George Bernard Shaw, the protagonist of the drama of ideas. He is not primarily a philosopher, for he has no philosophy; he is a man with a mind so honest, keen, original, impersonal,

[1] The popularity of symbolism with modern dramatists—even writers of realistic drama—increases noticeably, probably because they are trying to deal with ideas that are too profound for words. The symbolic 'background,' such as the roaring of the Severn floods in Mr Masefield's *The Tragedy of Nan*, has recently been used in Mr Maugham's *Rain*, and similar devices, though less imaginative, may be found in Mr Galsworthy's plays. In the work of Sir James Barrie and Lord Dunsany, and in nearly all poetic dramas, symbolism is frequently employed.

and unusually well equipped that his criticism of moral, social, and artistic problems acts upon the body of society like an X-ray. He realizes himself that he possesses this very rare quality of "normal mental vision," together with a remarkable gift of forcible and witty expression, and he has wisely chosen the stage as his pulpit. In this way he has expressed his policy: "Spare no pains to find out the right thing to say; and then say it with the most exasperating levity, as if it were the first thing that would come into anyone's head." Having decided to use the stage for his purpose, he took care to master his technique. His plays are, of course, uneven: they may be unusual, they may break every canon of dramatic art, but one has only to watch them, still more to act in them, to realize that they are excellent stage-plays. His drama is not concerned primarily with men and women, but with men and women in relation to an idea; yet the idea is always illustrated in terms of the stage, though for its full development it often depends upon a preface nearly as long as the play. His first play, *Widowers' Houses*, was produced in 1892, but he won little recognition until he began to publish his plays in 1898. His satire has been directed against most of the cherished institutions of the day—marriage, the Army, 'middle-class morality,' property, religion, the home, the medical profession, and the hero of history. Of late his interest has turned more definitely to history and myth, and his *Back to Methuselah* (1921) and *Saint Joan* (1923) are two of the most notable achievements of our age.

Mr John Galsworthy is next in popularity, and perhaps in importance too. He is the outstanding realist of the age, possessing in a remarkable degree the ability to discover the dramatic in natural and unforced situations. In his best plays, such as *Strife* (1909), there is an element of tragic impression and imaginative vision, and in all his plays, as in his novels, there is fine moral intent, an impatience of

shams, and a sense of the need of purpose in life. Professor Nicoll considers that Mr Galsworthy gives new expression to the essential idea of tragedy—that of waste. Waste, however, though an element in all great tragedy, is only one of many equally important elements, most of which are absent from Mr Galsworthy's work. Professor Nicoll says that "Mr Galsworthy's drama, true to the finest traditions of tragic art, is fundamentally modern, expressing to this age the spirit of the twentieth century as Shakespeare's tragedies enshrined the spirit of the Renascence." All art reflects the age of its birth; great art, besides doing this, is for all time. But though Mr Galsworthy's plays are ingeniously constructed, true to life, and full of witty dialogue, interesting incident, and stirring issues, they lack this timeless quality—they are plays of the moment. As Miss Storm Jameson says, "He does not create life; yet he has interpreted to-day. He is not original, he is merely faithful to life; not inspired, but thoughtful; not imaginative, but truthful." It is impossible, in a short extract, to illustrate either the wide range of Mr Galsworthy's work or his genius in handling a dramatic theme. The specimen printed below has been selected as a good example of the realistic comedy of which he is the most notable living exponent.

Other well-known writers of realistic social drama are Somerset Maugham, Granville Barker, St John Ervine, Harold Brighouse, Arnold Bennett, Stanley Houghton, St John Hankin, and Noel Coward, and besides their works there have been many other interesting plays, both English and American, of which limitations of space forbid mention here. The work of these playwrights differs widely, but it is alike in that it is all limited, like that of Mr Galsworthy, to a personal vision of real life, a desire to describe with perfect honesty various aspects of modern existence. Their work varies in technical quality, and in wit, and so on, but

it is all of a relatively high order. As social satire, the work of Mr Maugham is more significant than most, besides being extremely diverting, though Mr Granville Barker's characterization is more telling, and for uncompromising realism he is unsurpassed even by Mr Galsworthy. Mr St John Ervine's plays possess a force and dignity which make them memorable, in spite of their morbidity, but the plays of Mr Arnold Bennett, Mr Brighouse, and Houghton, though interesting and amusing enough, are little more than dramatic journalism, and their psychology has been not unfairly described as "notebook psychology." Mr St John Hankin has something of the impersonal element and polished wit of Mr Shaw: he treats the modern realistic drama somewhat in the cynical method of the comedy of manners. And this is still more true of Mr Noel Coward, the youngest of the well-known contemporary dramatists.

In addition to these more or less serious plays farces have been numerous, and many of them clever and amusing. Light comedy, closely akin to farce, and depending for its effect upon whimsical absurdity, has been exceedingly well handled by Mr A. A. Milne and other able writers. Melodrama, detective plays, and plays about the War and other topical subjects have appeared from time to time; in fact, the drama has never fulfilled more thoroughly its function as a "mirror of the age."

III. The Romantic School. Life is a mixture of comedy and tragedy, and modern drama, being true to life, cannot as a rule be classified under either of these heads. Technically, Mr Galsworthy's *Loyalties* is a tragedy, but such definition is clearly valueless. The realistic movement, however, began with the work of Ibsen, which was very nearly pure tragedy, and has returned to it in the plays of some of our poets. In the historical plays of Mr Masefield and Mr Drinkwater, and still more in the domestic plays of Mr Masefield and J. M. Synge, and to some extent of

Mr Yeats, we breathe again the authentic spirit of tragedy, of a belief in fate that is bigger than the men and women who sometimes try without succeeding and sometimes succeed without trying. Even *Abraham Lincoln* (1918), Mr Drinkwater's most famous play, has faults; but this play has been hailed as a fitting prelude to the drama of a new age, and it is possible that it does point the way to a revival of the tragic spirit which has been absent from our drama for over a hundred years. The Expressionist play, which attempts to embody ideas upon the stage by the use of symbols, is another interesting sign of the recrudescence of the tragic idea, and though it is at present in its infancy it seems likely that it is along these lines that the drama of the future will develop. Mr Laurence Housman's *Little Plays of St Francis* (1922) and other miniature dramas, Herbert Trench's *Napoleon* (1919), Miss Clemence Dane's *Will Shakespeare* (1921), and J. E. Flecker's *Hassan* (produced in 1923) are other remarkably moving tragedies, though the last three are inadequate stage-plays. *Will Shakespeare* contains beautiful blank verse. It is probable that one reason why tragedy is so rare on the modern stage is because no suitable medium has been found for it. Nearly all the poets write in prose (admittedly an inadequate instrument for tragedy) when they write for the stage, and when they do use verse neither they nor the actors are entirely happy in it. Blank verse, so marvellously suited to Elizabethan expression, is not at home in the theatre of to-day, and until a writer appears who is not only a poet with real tragic vision and mastery of phrase and rhythm, but also a practical dramatist who can apply his powers to the modern stage, it seems unlikely that attempts at pure tragedy will be anything but intermittent and tentative.

Many of these writers of tragedy, such as Masefield, Flecker, Yeats, and Housman, belong more properly to the romantic than to the realist school of drama. Tragedy is

always on the borderline between the two. Mr Yeats is too remote, his thought is too obscure for a dramatist, though his plays are beautiful poems: to all but the initiated few his symbolism means little, and much the same may be said of his followers and imitators. Not so Synge and Lady Gregory and Lord Dunsany, whose work—the first two chiefly 'realistic' and the last imaginative and fantastic—represents within the limits of the Irish school interesting developments of the two main forces in modern drama. For the best romantic drama is not to be found in the obscure symbolism of mystic poets, nor in vulgar 'romantic' plays such as *Kismet* and *Chu Chin Chow*, but in the irresponsible intellectual flights of men like Lord Dunsany and, still more, Sir James Barrie. The work of this last dramatist is indefinable and quite unique. I cannot do better than quote Mr Max Beerbohm's words: "The man of genius is that rare creation in whom imagination, not ousted by logic, in full growth, abides uncramped, in unison with full-grown logic. . . . Sir James Barrie is a child who can express through an artistic medium the childishness that is in him."

Unfortunately, difficulties of copyright make it impossible to print extracts from the plays of either Mr Shaw or Sir James Barrie. *The Showing-up of Blanco Posnet*, the first act of *Arms and the Man*, the third act of *Fanny's First Play*, or the dentist scene from *You Never Can Tell* would any of them be good scenes to read or perform as short specimens of Mr Shaw's work, and Act II of *Dear Brutus* is a good example of Sir James Barrie's most typical method.

WINDOWS

JOHN GALSWORTHY

(1922)

ACT I

The scene is in the Marches' dining-room. Breakfast is just over, but has not been cleared. Mrs March still sits behind the coffee-pot making up her daily list. She is personable, forty-eight, trim, well dressed, and more matter-of-fact than seems plausible. Mr March is sitting in an armchair smoking his pipe and reading his newspaper. He is a fine-looking man of fifty odd with red-grey moustaches and hair. Mary and Johnny are close to the fire-place. Johnny sits on the fender, smoking a cigarette and warming his back. He is a commonplace-looking young man, with a decided jaw, and is tall, neat, and soulful. He has been in the War and writes poetry. Mary is less ordinary; you cannot tell exactly what is the matter with her. She too is tall, a little absent, fair and well-looking. She has a small china dog in her hand, taken from the mantelpiece, and faces the audience. As the curtain rises she is saying in her soft and pleasant voice: "Well, what is the matter with us all, Johnny?"

JOHNNY. Stuck, as we were in the trenches—like china dogs. [*Pointing to the ornament.*

MR MARCH [*into his newspaper*]. *Damn* these people!

MARY. If there isn't an ideal left, Johnny, it's no use pretending one.

MRS MARCH [*to herself*]. Mutton cutlets. Johnny, will you be in to lunch? [JOHNNY *shakes his head.*] Mary? [MARY *nods.*] Geof?

MR MARCH [*into his paper*]. Swine!

MRS MARCH. That'll be three. [*To herself*] Spinach.

JOHNNY. If you'd just missed being killed for three blooming years for no spiritual reason whatever, you'd want something to bite on, Mary.

MRS MARCH [*jotting*]. Soap.

JOHNNY. What price the little and weak now? Freedom and self-determination and all that?

MARY. Forty to one—no takers.

JOHNNY. It doesn't seem to worry ***you***.

MR MARCH [*to his newspaper*]. Of all God-forsaken time-servers!

[MARY *is moved so far as to turn and look over his shoulder a minute.*

JOHNNY. Who?

MARY. Only the Old-un.

MR MARCH. This is absolutely Prussian!

MRS MARCH. Soup, lobster, chicken salad. Go to Mrs Hunt's.

MR MARCH. And this fellow hasn't the *nous* to see that if ever there was a moment when it would pay us to take risks, and be generous—My hat! He ought to be—knighted! [*Resumes his paper.*

JOHNNY. You see, even Dad can't suggest chivalry without talking of payment for it. That shows how we've sunk.

MARY [*roused*]. I'll tell you what, Johnny, it's mucking about with chivalry that makes your poetry rotten. [JOHNNY *seizes her arm and twists it.*] Shut up—that hurts. [JOHNNY *twists it more.*] You brute. [*He lets go.*

MRS MARCH. What are you two quarrelling about? Will you bring home cigarettes, Johnny—not Bogdogunov's Mamelukes—something more Anglo-American. Geof, can you eat preserved peaches?

MR MARCH. Hell! What a policy! Um?

MRS MARCH. Can you eat preserved peaches?

MR MARCH. Yes. [*To his paper*] Making the country stink in the eyes of the world!

MARY. Nostrils, Dad, nostrils. [MR MARCH *wriggles, half hearing.*

JOHNNY. Shallow idiots! Thinking we can do without chivalry!

MRS MARCH. I'm doing my best to get a parlourmaid, to-day, Mary, but these breakfast things won't clear themselves.

MARY. I'll clear them, Mother.

MRS MARCH. Good. [*She gets up.*] [*At the door*] Knitting-silk. [*She goes out.*

MR MARCH [*to his paper*]. If God doesn't open the earth soon——

MARY. Is there anything special, Dad?

MR MARCH. This sulphurous Government. [*He drops the paper.*] Give me a match, Mary.

[*As soon as the paper is out of his hands he becomes different—an affable man.*

MARY [*giving him a match*]. Do you mind writing in here this morning, Dad? Your study hasn't been done. There's nobody but Cook.

MR MARCH [*lighting his pipe*]. Anywhere.

[*He slews his armchair towards the fire.*

MARY. I'll get your things then.

[*She goes out. The lank and shirt-sleeved figure of* MR BLY, *with a pail of water and cloths, has entered, and stands near the window.*

BLY. Beg pardon, Mr March; d'you mind me cleanin' the windows here?

MR MARCH. Not a bit.

Re-enter MARY

MARY. Here you are, Dad! [*She puts his writing materials on a stool beside him.*] Come on, Johnny. [*Exeunt* MARY *and* JOHNNY.

MR MARCH [*relighting his pipe and preparing his materials*]. What do *you* think of things, Mr Bly?

BLY [*cleaning the windows*]. Not much, sir.

MR MARCH. Ah! [*He looks at* MR BLY, *struck by his large philosophical eyes and moth-eaten moustache.*] Nor I.

BLY. I rather thought that, sir, from your writings.

MR MARCH. Oh, do you read?

BLY. I was at sea once—formed the 'abit.

MR MARCH. Read any of my novels?

BLY. Not to say all through—I've read some of your articles in the Sunday papers, though. Makes you think! I've often thought I'd like to 'ave a talk with you, sir. But I'm keepin' you.

MR MARCH. Not at all. I enjoy it. Anything to put off work. You've seen a lot, I expect.

BLY. Ah! I've been on the beach in my day. [*He sponges at the window.*] It's given me a way o' lookin' at things that I don't find in other people. Look at the 'Ome Office. *They*'ve got no philosophy.

Enter MARY, *clearing. She listens.*

MR MARCH. What? Have you had dealings with them?

BLY. Over the reprieve that was got up for my daughter. But I'm keeping you.

[*He swabs at the window, but always at the same pane, so that he does not advance at all.*

MR MARCH. Reprieve?

BLY. Ah! She was famous at eighteen. The *Sunday Mercury* was full of 'er, when she was in prison.

MR MARCH [*delicately*]. Dear me! I'd no idea.

BLY. She's out now. Been out a fortnight. I always say that fame's ephemereal. But she'll never settle to that weaving. Her head got turned a bit.

MR MARCH. I'm afraid I'm in the dark, Mr Bly.

BLY. Why, don't you remember the Bly case? They sentenced 'er to be 'anged by the neck until she was dead, for smotherin' her baby. She was only eighteen at the time of speakin'.

MR MARCH. Oh! Yes! An inhuman business!

BLY. Ah! The jury recommended 'er to mercy. So they reduced it to Life.

MR MARCH. Life! Sweet heaven!

BLY. That's what I said; so they give her two years. I don't 'old with the *Sunday Mercury*, but it put *that* over. Wonderful the difference money makes. Did you ever read 'Aigel?

MR MARCH. Hegel, or Haeckel?

BLY. Yes; with an aitch. There's a balance abart 'im that I like. There's no doubt the Christian religion went too far. Turn the other cheek! What oh! An' this Anti-Christ, Neesha, what came in with the War—'e went too far in the other direction. Neither of 'em practical men. You've got to strike a balance and foller it.

MR MARCH. You're a philosopher, Mr Bly.

BLY [*modestly*]. Well, I do a bit in that line, too. In my opinion Nature made the individual believe 'e's goin' to live after he's dead just to keep 'im livin' while 'e's alive—otherwise 'e'd 'a died out.

MR MARCH. Quite a thought—quite a thought!

BLY. But I go one better than Nature. Follow your instincts is my motto.

MR MARCH. Excuse me, Mr Bly, I think Nature got hold of that before you.

BLY [*slightly chilled*]. Well, I'm keepin' you.

MR MARCH. Not at all. You're a believer in conscience, or the little voice within.

BLY. As a matter of fact, I've got my daughter here—in obeyance.

MR MARCH. Where? I didn't catch.

BLY. In the kitchen. Your cook told me you couldn't get 'old of an 'ouse-parlourmaid. So I thought there was just a chance—you being broad-minded.

MR MARCH. Oh, I see. What would your mother say, Mary?

MARY. Mother would say: "Has she had experience?"

BLY. I've told you about her experience.

MR MARCH. I'm a little afraid my wife would feel——

BLY. I remember when she was a little bit of a thing—no higher than my knee——

MR MARCH. My God! Yes. They've all been that. Well, let's see her, Mr Bly. Let's see her, if you don't mind.

BLY. Oh, I don't mind, sir, and Faith—that's my daughter's name, sir—she won't neither; she's used to bein' inspected by now.

MR MARCH. H'm. Mary, go and fetch her.

[MARY, *with a doubting smile, goes out.*

BLY [*who has been fumbling in his pocket, produces some yellow paper-cuttings, pinned together*]. Here's her references—the whole literature of the case. And here's a letter from the chaplain in one of the prisons sayin' she took a lot of interest in him; a nice young man, I believe. [*He suddenly brushes a tear out of his eye with the back of his hand.*] I never thought I could 'a felt like I did over 'er bein' in prison.

MR MARCH [*who is reading the cuttings*]. H'm! What hypocrites we are!

[MARY *returns with* FAITH BLY, *who stands demure and pretty on the far side of the table, her face an embodiment of the pathetic watchful prison faculty of adapting itself to whatever may be best for its owner at the moment. At this moment, one of considerable embarrassment for all, she looks on the ground.*

MR MARCH. Well, here we are! [*This remark attracts* FAITH; *she raises her eyes to his softly with a smile, and drops them again.*] So you want to be our parlourmaid?

FAITH. Yes, please.

MR MARCH. Well, Faith can remove mountains; but—er—I don't know if she can clear tables.

BLY. Now, show Mr March and the young lady what you can do with a plate.

[FAITH *begins to clear the table, mainly by the light of nature.* MR MARCH *looks out of the window.* MR BLY *goes on with his cleaning.*

MARY [*touching her father's arm*]. You're not watching, Dad.

MR MARCH. It's too pointed.

MARY. We've got to satisfy Mother.

MR MARCH. I can satisfy her better if I don't look.

MARY. You're right.

[FAITH *has paused and is watching them.* MARY *helps her finish clearing while the two men converse.*

BLY. Fine weather, sir, for the time of year.

MR MARCH. It is. The trees are growing.

BLY. Ah! I wouldn't be surprised to see a change in the Government before long. I've seen 'uge trees in Brazil without any roots—seen 'em come down with a crash.

MR MARCH. Good image, Mr Bly. Hope you're right!

BLY. Well, Governments! They're all the same—butter when they're out of power, and blood when they're in. And Lord! 'ow they do abuse other Governments for doin' the things they do themselves. Excuse me, I'll want her dosseer back, sir, when you've done with it.

MR MARCH. Yes, yes. [*He turns, rubbing his hands at the cleared table.*] Well, that seems all right! Only, Mr Bly, I can't absolutely answer for Mrs March. She may think——

MARY. There *is* Mother; I heard the door.

BLY. I quite understand, sir; I've been a married man myself. It's very queer the way women look at things. I'll take her away now, and come back presently and do these other windows. You can talk it over by yourselves.

[*Exeunt* BLY *and* FAITH, FAITH *giving another little soft look at* MR MARCH *as she goes out.*

MARY. How are you going to put it to Mother?

MR MARCH. Tell her the story, and pitch it strong.

MARY. Mother's not impulsive.

MR MARCH. We *must* tell her, or she'll think me mad.

MARY. She'll think that any way, dear.

MR MARCH. Here she is! Stand by!

[*He runs his arm through* MARY'S, *and they sit on the fender, at bay. Enter* MRS MARCH.

MR MARCH. Well, what luck?

MRS MARCH. None.

MR MARCH [*unguardedly*]. Good!

MRS MARCH. What?

MR MARCH [*cheerfully*]. Well, the fact is, Mary and I have caught one for you; Mr Bly's daughter——

MRS MARCH. Are you out of your senses? Don't you know that she's the girl who——

MR MARCH. That's it. She wants a lift.

MRS MARCH. Geof!

MR MARCH. Well, don't we want a maid?

MRS MARCH [*ineffably*]. Ridiculous! [*Crossing to the bell and ringing*] You'll just send for Mr Bly and get rid of her again.

MR MARCH. Joan, if we comfortable people can't put ourselves a little out of the way to give a helping hand——

MRS MARCH. To girls who smother their babies?

MR MARCH. Joan, I revolt. I won't be a Pharisee and a hypocrite.

MRS MARCH. Well, for goodness sake let me be one.

MARY [*as the door opens*]. Here's Cook!

[COOK *stands—sixty, stout, and comfortable—with a crumpled smile.*

COOK. Did you ring, ma'am?

MR MARCH. We're in a moral difficulty, Cook, so naturally we come to you. [COOK *beams.*

MRS MARCH. Nothing of the sort, Cook, it's a question of common sense.

COOK. Yes, ma'am.

MRS MARCH. That girl, Faith Bly, wants to come here as parlour-maid. Absurd!

COOK. Of course, ma'am, it is a risk; but there! You've got to take 'em to get maids nowadays. If it isn't in the past, it's in the future. I dare say I could learn 'er.

MRS MARCH. Cook, you're wandering. I'm surprised at your encouraging the idea. I really am.

MR MARCH. You think we might give her a chance, Cook?

COOK. My 'eart say yes, ma'am.

MR MARCH. Ha!

COOK. And my 'ead says no, sir.

MRS MARCH. Yes!

MR MARCH. Strike your balance, Cook.

COOK [*deliberating*]. Well . . . ask Master Johnny, sir. He's been in the War.

MR MARCH [*to* MARY]. Get Johnny. [MARY *goes out*

MRS MARCH. What on earth has the War to do with it?

COOK. The things he tells me, ma'am, is too wonderful for words. He's had to do with prisoners and generals, every sort of 'orror.

MR MARCH. Cook's quite right. The War destroyed all our ideals, and probably created the baby.

MRS MARCH. It didn't smother it; or condemn the girl.

MR MARCH [*running his hands through his hair*]. The more I think of that——

MRS MARCH. You see, Cook, that's the mood in which I have to engage a parlourmaid. What am I to do with your master?

COOK. It's a 'ealthy rage, ma'am.

MRS MARCH. I'm tired of being the only sober person in this house.

COOK [*reproachfully*]. Oh! ma'am, I never touch a drop.

MRS MARCH. I didn't mean anything of that sort.

[MARY *returns with* JOHNNY.

MR MARCH. Well, Johnny, has Mary told you?

JOHNNY. Of course you ought to take her, Mother. It's a chance to make something decent out of her.

MRS MARCH. I can't understand this passion for vicarious heroism, Johnny.

JOHNNY. Vicarious!

MRS MARCH. Well, where do you come in? You'll make poems about the injustice of the Law. Your father will use her in a novel. She'll wear Mary's blouses, and everybody will be happy —except Cook and me.

JOHNNY. We'll all help you.

MRS MARCH. For heaven's sake—no, Johnny!

MARY. We can't tell till we've tried, Mother.

COOK. It's wonderful the difference good food'll make, ma'am.

MRS MARCH. Well, you're all against me. Have it your own way, and when you regret it—remember me!

MR MARCH. We will, we will! That's settled, then. Bring her in and tell her. We'll go on to the terrace.

[*He and* JOHNNY *go out through the window.*

MARY [*opening the door*]. Come in, please.

[FAITH *enters, and stands beside* COOK. MARY *goes out.*

MRS MARCH. You want to come to us, I hear.

FAITH. Yes, ma'am.

MRS MARCH. Are you going to do your best for us?

FAITH. Yes, ma'am.

MRS MARCH. Well, then, Cook will show you where things are kept. Your wages will be thirty until we see where we are. Every other Sunday and Thursday afternoon. I hope you'll get on. I'll leave you with Cook now. [*She goes out.*

FAITH [*with a jerk, as if coming out of plaster of Paris*]. *She's* never been in prison!

COOK [*comfortably*]. Well, my dear, we can't all of us go everywhere, 'owever 'ard we try!

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

JOHN DRINKWATER

(1918)

Abraham Lincoln has been President of the United States for about a year. The Southern States have claimed the right to secede from the Union, a step which Lincoln made it clear, before his election, he would resist with every means in his power. He is also determined upon the abolition of slavery, a proposal very unpopular in the South. Each scene in this play is preceded by a prologue, spoken by either one or two chroniclers (who should be dressed in black robes). The extract given here is the prologue to Act I, Scene II, and part of the scene.

PROLOGUE

THE TWO CHRONICLERS. Lonely is the man who understands.
Lonely is vision that leads a man away
From the pasture-lands,
From the furrows of corn and the brown loads of hay,
To the mountain-side,
To the high places where contemplation brings
All his adventurings
Among the sowers and the tillers in the wide
Valleys to one fused experience,
That shall control
The courses of his soul,
And give his hand
Courage and continence.

FIRST CHRONICLER. Shall a man understand,
He shall know bitterness because his kind,
Being perplexed of mind,
Hold issues even that are nothing mated.
And he shall give
Counsel out of his wisdom that none shall hear;
And steadfast in vain persuasion must he live,

And unabated
Shall his temptation be.

SECOND CHRONICLER. Coveting the little, the instant gain,
The brief security,
And easy-tongued renown,
Many will mock the vision that his brain
Builds to a far, unmeasured monument,
And many bid his resolutions down
To the wages of content.

FIRST CHRONICLER. A year goes by.

THE TWO TOGETHER. Here contemplate
A heart, undaunted to possess
Itself among the glooms of fate,
In vision and in loneliness.

The scene is SEWARD'S *room at Washington.* WILLIAM SEWARD, *Secretary of State, is seated at his table with* JOHNSON WHITE *and* CALEB JENNINGS, *representing the Commissioners of the Confederate States. They have been urging* SEWARD *to use his influence with* LINCOLN *to withdraw his garrison from Fort Sumter, and so avoid civil war.*

WHITE. It's the common feeling in the South, Mr Seward, that you're the one man at Washington to see this thing with large imagination. I say this with no disrespect to the President.

SEWARD. You understand, of course, that I can say nothing officially.

JENNINGS. These are nothing but informal suggestions.

SEWARD. But I may tell you that I am not unsympathetic.

WHITE. We were sure that that would be so.

SEWARD. And my word is not without influence.

JENNINGS. It can be used to bring you very great credit, Mr Seward.

SEWARD. In the meantime you will say nothing of this interview beyond making your reports, which should be confidential.

WHITE. You may rely upon us.

SEWARD [*rising with the others*]. Then I will bid you good-morning.

WHITE. We are profoundly sensible of the magnanimous temper in which we are convinced you will conduct this grave business. Good morning, Mr Seward.

JENNINGS. And I—— [*There is a knock at the door.*

SEWARD. Yes—come in. [*A* CLERK *comes in.*

CLERK. The President is coming up the stairs, sir.

SEWARD. Thank you. [*The* CLERK *goes.*] This is unfortunate. Say nothing, and go at once. [LINCOLN *comes in.*

LINCOLN. Good morning, Mr Seward. Good morning, gentlemen.

SEWARD. Good morning, Mr President. And I am obliged to you for calling, gentlemen. Good morning.

[*He moves toward the door.*

LINCOLN. Perhaps these gentlemen could spare me ten minutes.

WHITE. It might not——

LINCOLN. Say five minutes.

JENNINGS. Perhaps you would——

LINCOLN. I am always anxious for any opportunity to exchange views with our friends of the South. Much enlightenment may be gained in five minutes. Be seated, I beg you—if Mr Seward will allow us.

SEWARD. By all means. Shall I leave you?

LINCOLN. Leave us—but why? I may want your support, Mr Secretary, if we should not wholly agree. Be seated, gentlemen.

[SEWARD *places a chair for* LINCOLN, *and they sit at the table.*

LINCOLN. You have messages for us?

WHITE. Well, no, we can't say that.

LINCOLN. No messages? Perhaps I am inquisitive?

SEWARD. These gentlemen are anxious to sound any moderating influences.

LINCOLN. I trust they bring moderating influences with them. You will find me a ready listener, gentlemen.

JENNINGS. It's a delicate matter, Mr Lincoln. Shall we tell the President what we came to say, Mr Seward?

LINCOLN. I should be grateful. If I should fail to understand, Mr Seward, no doubt, will enlighten me.

JENNINGS. We thought it hardly worth while to trouble you at so early a stage.

LINCOLN. So early a stage of what?

JENNINGS. I mean——

SEWARD. These gentlemen, in common anxiety for peace, were merely seeking the best channel through which suggestions could be made.

LINCOLN. To whom?

SEWARD. To the Government.

LINCOLN. The head of the Government is here.

WHITE. But——

LINCOLN. Come, gentlemen; what is it?

JENNINGS. It's this matter of Fort Sumter, Mr President. If you withdraw your garrison from Fort Sumter it won't be looked upon as weakness in you. It will merely be looked upon as a concession to a natural privilege. We believe that the South at heart does not want secession. It wants to establish the right to decide for itself.

LINCOLN. The South wants the stamp of national approval upon slavery. It can't have it.

WHITE. Surely that's not the point. There's no law in the South against slavery.

LINCOLN. Laws come from opinion, Mr White. The South knows it.

JENNINGS. Mr President, if I may say so, you don't quite understand.

LINCOLN. Does Mr Seward understand?

WHITE. We believe so.

LINCOLN. You are wrong. He doesn't understand, because you didn't mean him to. I don't blame you. You think you are acting for the best. You think you've got an honest case. But I'll put your case for you, and I'll put it naked. Why does the South propose secession? Because it knows abolition may come, and it wants to avoid it. It wants more; it wants the right to extend the slave foundation. But you weren't prepared for resistance; you don't want resistance. And you hope that if you can tide over the first crisis and make us give way, opinion will prevent us from opposing you with force again, and you'll be able to get your own way about the slave business by threats. That's your case. You didn't say so to Mr Seward, but it is. Now, I'll give you my answer. Gentlemen, it's no good hiding this thing in a corner. It's got to be settled. I said the other day that Fort Sumter would be held as long as we could hold it, and I said it because I know exactly what it means.

JENNINGS. I see how it is. You may force freedom as much as you like, but we are to beware how we force slavery.

LINCOLN. It couldn't be put better, Mr Jennings. That's what the Union means. But be clear about this issue. If there is war, it will not be on the slave question. If the South is loyal to the Union, it can fight slave legislation by constitutional means, and win its way if it can. But we won't break up the Union, and you shan't. In your hands, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, do not allow it to break our bonds of affection. That is our answer. Tell them that. Will you tell them that?

WHITE. You are determined?

LINCOLN. I beg you to tell them.

JENNINGS. It shall be as you wish.

LINCOLN. Implore them to order Beauregard's return. You can telegraph it now, from here. Will you do that?

WHITE. If you wish it.

LINCOLN. Earnestly. Mr Seward, will you please place a clerk at their service. Ask for an answer.

[SEWARD *rings a bell.* *A* CLERK *comes in.*

SEWARD. Give these gentlemen a private wire. Place yourself at their disposal.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

[WHITE *and* JENNINGS *go out with the* CLERK. *For a moment* LINCOLN *and* SEWARD *are silent,* LINCOLN *pacing the room,* SEWARD *standing at the table.*

LINCOLN. Seward, this won't do.

SEWARD. You don't suspect——

LINCOLN. I do not. But let us be plain. No man can say how wisely, but Providence has brought me to the leadership of this country, with a task before me greater than that which rested on Washington himself. When I made my Cabinet, you were the first man I chose. I do not regret it; I think I never shall. But remember this, faith earns faith. What is it? Why didn't those men come to see me?

SEWARD. They thought my word might bear more weight with you than theirs.

LINCOLN. Your word for what?

SEWARD. Discretion about Fort Sumter.

LINCOLN. Discretion?

SEWARD. It's devastating, this thought of war.

LINCOLN. It is. Do you think I'm less sensible of that than you? War should be impossible. But you can only make it impossible by destroying its causes. If we withdraw from Fort Sumter, we do nothing to destroy the cause. We can only destroy it by convincing them that secession is a betrayal of their trust. Please God we may do so.

SEWARD. Has there, perhaps, been some timidity in making all this clear to the country?

LINCOLN. Timidity? And you were talking of discretion.

SEWARD. I mean that perhaps our policy has not been sufficiently defined.

LINCOLN. And have you not concurred in all our decisions? Do not deceive yourself. You urge me to discretion in one breath and tax me with timidity in the next. Seward, you may think I'm simple, but I can see your mind working as plainly as you might see the innards of a clock. You can bring great gifts to this government, with your zeal, and your administrative experience, and your love of men. Don't spoil it by thinking I've got a dull brain.

SEWARD. Yes, I see. I've not been thinking quite clearly about it all.

LINCOLN [*taking a paper from his pocket*]. Here's the paper you sent me. "Some Thoughts for the President's Consideration. Great Britain . . . Russia . . . Mexico . . . policy. Either the President must control this himself, or devolve it on some member of his Cabinet. It is not my especial province. But I neither seek to evade nor to assume responsibility."

[*There is a pause, the two men looking at each other without speaking.* LINCOLN *hands the paper to* SEWARD, *who holds it for a moment, tears it up, and throws it into the basket.*

SEWARD. I beg your pardon.

LINCOLN [*taking his hand*]. That's brave of you.

[MR SLANEY, *a secretary, comes in*

SLANEY. There's a messenger from Major Anderson, sir. He's ridden straight from Fort Sumter.

LINCOLN. Take him to my room. No, bring him here.

[SLANEY *goes.*

SEWARD. What does it mean?

LINCOLN. I don't like the sound of it. [*He rings a bell.* *A* CLERK

comes in.] Are there any gentlemen of the Cabinet in the house?

CLERK. Mr Chase and Mr Blair, I believe, sir.

LINCOLN. My compliments to them, and will they be prepared to see me here at once if necessary. Send the same message to any other ministers you can find.

CLERK. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*

LINCOLN. We may have to decide now—now.

[SLANEY *shows in a perspiring and dust-covered messenger, and retires.*

LINCOLN. From Major Anderson?

MESSENGER. Yes, sir. Word of mouth, sir.

LINCOLN. Your credentials?

MESSENGER [*giving* LINCOLN *a paper*]. Here, sir.

LINCOLN [*glancing at it*]. Well?

MESSENGER. Major Anderson presents his duty to the Government. He can hold the fort three days more without provisions and reinforcements.

[LINCOLN *rings the bell, and waits until a third* CLERK *comes in.*

LINCOLN. See if Mr White and Mr Jennings have had any answer yet. Mr—what's his name?

SEWARD. Hawkins.

LINCOLN. Mr Hawkins is attending to them. And ask Mr Slaney to come here.

CLERK. Yes, sir.

[*He goes.* LINCOLN *sits at the table and writes.* SLANEY *comes in.*

LINCOLN [*writing*]. Mr Slaney, do you know where General Scott is?

SLANEY. At headquarters, I think, sir.

LINCOLN. Take this to him yourself and bring an answer back.

SLANEY. Yes, sir. [*He takes the note and goes.*

LINCOLN. Are things very bad at the fort?

MESSENGER. The Major says three days, sir. Most of us would have said twenty-four hours. [*A knock at the door.*

SEWARD. Yes. [HAWKINS *comes in.*

HAWKINS. Mr White is just receiving a message across the wire, sir.

LINCOLN. Ask him to come here directly he's finished.

HAWKINS. Yes, sir.

[*He goes.* LINCOLN *goes to a far door and opens it. He speaks to the* MESSENGER.

LINCOLN. Will you wait in here?

[*The* MESSENGER *goes through.* SEWARD *goes to the window and throws it up. He stands looking into the street.* LINCOLN *stands at the table looking fixedly at the door. After a moment or two there is a knock.*

LINCOLN. Come in.

[HAWKINS *shows in* WHITE *and* JENNINGS *and goes out.* SEWARD *closes the window.*

LINCOLN. Well?

WHITE. I'm sorry. They won't give way.

LINCOLN. You told them all I said?

JENNINGS. Everything.

LINCOLN. It's critical.

WHITE. They are definite.

[LINCOLN *paces once or twice up and down the room.*

LINCOLN. They leave no opening?

WHITE. I regret to say, none.

LINCOLN. It's a grave decision. Terribly grave. Thank you, gentlemen. Good morning.

WHITE. JENNINGS. } Good morning, gentlemen. [*They go out.*

LINCOLN. My God. Seward, we need great courage, great faith. [*He rings the bell. The second* CLERK *comes in.*

LINCOLN. Did you take my messages?

CLERK. Yes, sir. Mr Chase and Mr Blair are here. The other ministers are coming immediately.

LINCOLN. Ask them to come here at once. And send Mr Slaney directly he returns.

CLERK. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*

LINCOLN [*after a pause*]. "There is a tide in the affairs of men . . ." Do you read Shakespeare, Seward?

SEWARD. Shakespeare? No.

LINCOLN. Ah!

[SALMON CHASE, *Secretary of the Treasury, and* MONTGOMERY BLAIR, *Postmaster-General, come in and exchange greetings. As they draw up chairs to the table, the other members of the Cabinet,* SIMON CAMERON,

CALEB SMITH, BURNET HOOK, *and* GIDEON WELLES, *come in and join them, with more greetings.*

LINCOLN. Gentlemen, we meet in a crisis, the most fateful, perhaps, that has ever faced any Government in this country. A message has just come from Anderson. He can hold Fort Sumter three days at most unless we send men and provisions.

CAMERON. How many men?

LINCOLN. I shall know from Scott in a few moments how many are necessary. My mind is clear. To do less than we can do, whatever that may be, will be fundamentally to allow the South's claim to right of secession. That is my opinion. If you evade the question now, you will have to answer it to-morrow.

BLAIR. I agree with the President.

HOOK. We ought to defer action as long as possible. I consider that we should withdraw.

LINCOLN. Don't you see that to withdraw may postpone war, but that it will make it inevitable in the end?

SMITH. It is inevitable if we resist.

LINCOLN. I fear it will be so. But in that case we shall enter it with uncompromised principles. Mr Chase?

CHASE. It is difficult. But, on the whole, my opinion is with yours, Mr President.

LINCOLN. And you, Seward?

SEWARD. I respect your opinion, but I must differ.

[*A knock at the door.*

LINCOLN. Come in.

[SLANEY *comes in. He gives a letter to* LINCOLN *and goes.*

LINCOLN [*reading*]. Scott says twenty thousand men.

SEWARD. We haven't ten thousand ready.

LINCOLN. It remains a question of sending provisions. I charge you, all of you, to weigh this thing with all your understanding. I tremble at the thought of war. But we have in our hands a sacred trust. It is threatened. We have had no thought of aggression. We have been the aggressed. Persuasion has failed, and I conceive it to be our duty to resist. To withhold supplies from Anderson would be to deny that duty. Gentlemen, the matter is before you. [*A pause.*] For provisioning the fort? [LINCOLN, CHASE, *and* BLAIR *hold up their hands.*] For immediate withdrawal? [SEWARD, CAMERON, SMITH, HOOK, *and* WELLES *hold up their hands. There is a pause of some moments.*] Gentlemen,

I may have to take upon myself the responsibility of overriding your vote. It will be for me to satisfy Congress and public opinion. Should I receive any resignations? [*There is silence.*] I thank you for your consideration, gentlemen. That is all. [*They rise, and the ministers, with the exception of* SEWARD, *go out, talking as they pass beyond the door.*] You are wrong, Seward, wrong.

SEWARD. I believe you. I respect your judgment even as far as that. But I must speak as I feel.

LINCOLN. May I speak to this man alone?

SEWARD. Certainly.

[*He goes out.* LINCOLN *stands motionless for a moment. Then he moves to a map of the United States that is hanging on the wall, and looks at it. He goes to the far door and opens it.*

LINCOLN. Will you come in? [*The* MESSENGER *comes.*] Can you ride back to Major Anderson at once?

MESSENGER. Yes, sir.

LINCOLN. Tell him that we cannot reinforce him immediately. We haven't the men.

MESSENGER. Yes, sir.

LINCOLN. And say that the first convoy of supplies will leave Washington this evening.

MESSENGER. Yes, sir.

LINCOLN. Thank you.

[*The* MESSENGER *goes.* LINCOLN *stands at the table for a moment; he rings the bell.* HAWKINS *comes in.*

LINCOLN. Mr Slaney, please.

HAWKINS. Yes, sir.

[*He goes out, and a moment later* SLANEY *comes in.*

LINCOLN. Go to General Scott. Ask him to come to me at once.

SLANEY. Yes, sir. [*He goes.*

RIDERS TO THE SEA

J. M. Synge

(1904)

The scene is in a cottage in the West of Ireland, with nets, oil-skins, spinning-wheel, and some new boards standing by the wall. While Maurya has gone out to see her son Bartley take some horses off by sea to Galway Fair, her daughters, Cathleen and Nora, examine a bundle of clothes that has been washed up by the sea, to find out whether they are the clothes of their brother Michael, who has been missing for some days.

CATHLEEN [*taking the bundle*]. Did he say what way they were found?

NORA [*coming down*]. "There were two men," says he, "and they rowing round with poteen before the cocks crowed, and the oar of one of them caught the body, and they passing the black cliffs of the north."

CATHLEEN [*trying to open the bundle*]. Give me a knife, Nora; the string's perished with the salt water, and there's a black knot on it you wouldn't loosen in a week.

NORA [*giving her a knife*]. I've heard tell it was a long way to Donegal.

CATHLEEN [*cutting the string*]. It is surely. There was a man in here a while ago—the man that sold us that knife—and he said if you set off walking from the rocks beyond, it would be in seven days you'ld be in Donegal.

NORA. And what time would a man take, and he floating?

[CATHLEEN *opens the bundle, and takes out a bit of a shirt and a stocking. They look at them eagerly.*

CATHLEEN [*in a low voice*]. The Lord spare us, Nora! isn't it a queer hard thing to say if it's his they are surely?

NORA. I'll get his shirt off the hook, the way we can put the one flannel on the other. [*She looks through some clothes hanging in the corner.*] It's not with them, Cathleen, and where will it be?

CATHLEEN. I'm thinking Bartley put it on him in the morning, for his own shirt was heavy with the salt in it. [*Pointing to the corner*] There's a bit of a sleeve was of the same stuff. Give me that and it will do. [NORA *brings it to her and they compare the flannel.*] It's the same stuff, Nora; but if it is itself aren't there

great rolls of it in the shops of Galway, and isn't it many another man may have a shirt of it as well as Michael himself?

NORA [*who has taken up the stocking and counted the stitches, crying out*]. It's Michael, Cathleen, it's Michael; God spare his soul, and what will herself say when she hears this story, and Bartley on the sea?

CATHLEEN [*taking the stocking*]. It's a plain stocking.

NORA. It's the second one of the third pair I knitted, and I put up three-score stitches, and I dropped four of them.

CATHLEEN [*counts the stitches*]. It's that number is in it. [*Crying out*] Ah, Nora, isn't it a bitter thing to think of him floating that way to the far north, and no one to keen him but the black hags that do be flying on the sea?

NORA [*swinging herself half round, and throwing out her arms on the clothes*]. And isn't it a pitiful thing when there is nothing left of a man who was a great rower and fisher, but a bit of an old shirt and a plain stocking?

CATHLEEN [*after an instant*]. Tell me is herself coming, Nora? I hear a little sound on the path.

NORA [*looking out*]. She is, Cathleen. She's coming up to the door.

CATHLEEN. Put these things away before she'll come in. May be it's easier she'll be after giving her blessing to Bartley, and we won't let on we've heard anything the time he's on the sea.

NORA [*helping* CATHLEEN *to close the bundle*]. We'll put them here in the corner.

[*They put them into a hole in the chimney-corner.* CATHLEEN *goes back to the spinning-wheel.*

NORA. Will she see it was crying I was?

CATHLEEN. Keep your back to the door the way the light'll not be on you.

[NORA *sits down in the chimney-corner, with her back to the door.* MAURYA *comes in very slowly, without looking at the girls, and goes over to her stool at the other side of the fire. The cloth with the bread is still in her hand. The girls look at each other, and* NORA *points to the bundle of bread.*

CATHLEEN [*after spinning for a moment*]. You didn't give him his bit of bread?

[MAURYA *begins to keen softly, without turning round.*

CATHLEEN. Did you see him riding down?

[MAURYA *goes on keening.*

CATHLEEN [*a little impatiently*]. God forgive you; isn't it a better thing to raise your voice and tell what you seen, than to be making lamentation for a thing that's done? Did you see Bartley, I'm saying to you?

MAURYA [*with a weak voice*]. My heart's broken from this day.

CATHLEEN [*as before*]. Did you see Bartley?

MAURYA. I seen the fearfullest thing.

CATHLEEN [*leaves her wheel and looks out*]. God forgive you; he's riding the mare now over the green head, and the grey pony behind him.

MAURYA [*starts, so that her shawl falls back from her head and shows her white, tossed hair. With a frightened voice*]. The grey pony behind him . . .

CATHLEEN [*coming to the fire*]. What is it ails you, at all?

MAURYA [*speaking very slowly*]. I've seen the fearfullest thing any person has seen, since the day Bride Dara seen the dead man with the child in his arms.

CATHLEEN. } Uah.
NORA. }

[*They crouch down in front of the old woman at the fire.*

NORA. Tell us what it is you seen.

MAURYA. I went down to the spring well, and I stood there saying a prayer to myself. Then Bartley came along, and he riding on the red mare with the grey pony behind him. [*She puts up her hands, as if to hide something from her eyes.*] The Son of God spare us, Nora!

CATHLEEN. What is it you seen?

MAURYA. I seen Michael himself.

CATHLEEN [*speaking softly*]. You did not, Mother. It wasn't Michael you seen, for his body is after being found in the far north, and he's got a clean burial, by the grace of God.

MAURYA [*a little defiantly*]. I'm after seeing him this day, and he riding and galloping. Bartley came first on the red mare, and I tried to say "God speed you," but something choked the words in my throat. He went by quickly; and "The blessing of God on you," says he, and I could say nothing. I looked up then, and I crying, at the grey pony, and there was Michael upon it—with fine clothes upon him, and new shoes on his feet.

CATHLEEN [*beginning to keen*]. It's destroyed we are from this day. It's destroyed surely.

NORA. Didn't the young priest say the Almighty God won't leave her destitute with no son living?

MAURYA [*in a low voice, but clearly*]. It's little the like of him knows of the sea. . . . Bartley will be lost now, and let you call in Eamon and make me a good coffin out of the white boards, for I won't live after them. I've had a husband, and a husband's father, and six sons in this house—six fine men, though it was a hard birth I had with every one of them and they coming into the world—and some of them were found, and some of them were not found, but they're gone now, the lot of them. . . . There were Stephen, and Shawn, were lost in the great wind, and found after in the Bay of Gregory of the Golden Mouth, and carried up the two of them on one plank, and in by that door.

[*She pauses for a moment, the girls start as if they heard something through the door that is half open behind them.*

NORA [*in a whisper*]. Did you hear that, Cathleen? Did you hear a noise in the north-east?

CATHLEEN [*in a whisper*]. There's some one after crying out by the sea-shore.

MAURYA [*continues without hearing anything*]. There was Sheamus and his father, and his own father again, were lost in a dark night, and not a stick or sign of them was seen when the sun went up. There was Patch after was drowned out of a curragh that turned over. I was sitting here with Bartley, and he a baby, lying on my two knees, and I seen two women, and three women, and four women coming in, and they crossing themselves, and not saying a word. I looked out then, and there were men coming after them, and they holding a thing in the half of a red sail, and water dripping out of it—it was a dry day, Nora—and leaving a track to the door.

[*She pauses again with her hand stretched out towards the door. It opens softly and old women begin to come in, crossing themselves on the threshold, and kneeling down in front of the stage with red petticoats over their heads.*

MAURYA [*half in a dream, to* CATHLEEN]. Is it Patch, or Michael, or what is it at all?

CATHLEEN. Michael is after being found in the far north, and when he is found there, how could he be here in this place?

MAURYA. There does be a power of young men floating round in the sea, and what way would they know if it was Michael they had, or another man like him, for when a man is nine days in the sea, and the wind blowing, it's hard set his own mother would be to say what man was in it.

CATHLEEN. It's Michael, God spare him, for they're after sending us a bit of his clothes from the far north.

[*She reaches out and hands* MAURYA *the clothes that belonged to* MICHAEL. MAURYA *stands up slowly, and takes them in her hands.* NORA *looks out.*

NORA. They're carrying a thing among them, and there's water dripping out of it, and leaving a track by the big stones.

CATHLEEN [*in a whisper to the women who have come in*]. Is it Bartley it is?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. It is, surely, God rest his soul.

[*Two younger women come in and pull out the table. Then men carry in the body of* BARTLEY, *laid on a plank, with a bit of sail over it, and lay it on the table.*

CATHLEEN [*to the women as they are doing so*]. What way was he drowned?

ONE OF THE WOMEN. The grey pony knocked him over into the sea, and he was washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks.

[MAURYA *has gone over and knelt down at the head of the table. The women are keening softly and swaying themselves with a slow movement.* CATHLEEN *and* NORA *kneel at the other end of the table. The men kneel near the door.*

MAURYA [*raising her head, and speaking as if she did not see the people around her*]. They're all gone now, and there isn't anything more the sea can do to me. . . . I'll have no call now to be up crying and praying when the wind breaks from the south, and you can hear the surf is in the west, making a great stir with the two noises, and they hitting one on the other. I'll have no call now to be going down and getting Holy Water in the dark nights after Samhain, and I won't care what way the sea is when the other women will be keening. [*To* NORA] Give me the Holy Water, Nora; there's a small sup still on the dresser.

[NORA *gives it to her.*

MAURYA [*drops* MICHAEL'S *clothes across* BARTLEY'S *feet, and*

sprinkles the Holy Water over him]. It isn't that I haven't prayed for you, Bartley, to the Almighty God. It isn't that I haven't said prayers in the dark night till you wouldn't know what I'ld be saying; but it's a great rest I'll have now, and it's time, surely. It's a great rest I'll have now, and great sleeping in the long nights after Samhain, if it's only a bit of wet flour we do have to eat, and maybe a fish that would be stinking.

[*She kneels down again, crossing herself, and saying prayers under her breath.*

CATHLEEN [*to an* OLD MAN]. Maybe yourself and Eamon would make a coffin when the sun rises. We have fine white boards herself bought, God help her, thinking Michael would be found, and I have new cake you can eat while you'll be working.

THE OLD MAN [*looking at the boards*]. Are there nails with them?

CATHLEEN. There are not, Colum; we didn't think of the nails.

ANOTHER MAN. It's a great wonder she wouldn't think of the nails, and all the coffins she's seen made already.

CATHLEEN. It's getting old she is, and broken.

[MAURYA *stands up again very slowly and spreads out the pieces of* MICHAEL'S *clothes beside the body, sprinkling them with the last of the Holy Water.*

NORA [*in a whisper to* CATHLEEN]. She's quiet now and easy; but the day Michael was drowned you could hear her crying out from this to the spring well. It's fonder she was of Michael, and would any one have thought that?

CATHLEEN [*slowly and clearly*]. An old woman will be soon tired with anything she will do, and isn't it nine days herself is after crying and keening, and making great sorrow in the house?

MAURYA [*puts the empty cup mouth downwards on the table, and lays her hands together on* BARTLEY'S *feet*]. They're all together this time, and the end is come. May the Almighty God have mercy on Bartley's soul, and on Michael's soul, and on the souls of Sheamus and Patch, and Stephen and Shawn [*bending her head*]; and may he have mercy on my soul, Nora, and on the soul of every one is left living in the world.

[*She pauses, and the keen rises a little more loudly from the women, then sinks away.*

MAURYA [*continuing*]. Michael has a clean burial in the far north, by the grace of the Almighty God. Bartley will have a

fine coffin out of the white boards, and a deep grave surely. What more can we want than that? No man at all can be living for ever, and we must be satisfied.

[*She kneels down again, and the curtain falls slowly.*